

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: P.Stradins Medical College of the University of Latvia

Study field: Social Welfare

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# Summary Assessment of the Study Field

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The experts have evaluated the study field "Social Welfare" at the P. Stradins Medical College of the University of Latvia (further in text - LU PSMC, college) based on the documents and interviews conducted during the visit, as well as by getting acquainted with the LU PSMC college website. The review includes expert assessment of the criteria set and provides feedback and recommendations for further development.

The work of the college with assurance of the quality of studies and the compliance of the study field "Social Welfare" with the binding regulations of the Republic of Latvia and the Quality Assurance of Standards and Guidelines in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) is assessed positively. The general description and impression during evaluation provide good examples of performed and planned activities, such as expanding the content of study courses with industry innovations, including in-depth acquisition of competencies in study courses of the study programmes, according to the requirements of the specific qualification (an example of the study course General Rehabilitation and Personnel Oriented Approach is given).

Highly appreciated the college pointed challenges and plans for the coming years in the direction of digitalization of the study environment, emphasizing the assessment of study programmes outcomes, the development of students' critical thinking, the development of the research plan to increase the publicity rates of the college's academic staff and to develop student research work. The urgency of the time in today's society requires the development of digital solutions, but is understandable that implementation of new technologies requires additional resources, time and organisational expenses. Therefore, it is always necessary to evaluate and model solutions that are as simple as possible, use free solutions to balance the priority of digitalization with the protection of human resources, mutual communication, always being able to keep to the line that the lecturer, support staff, student, graduate and ultimately our professional customer is the highest value above all technological advances.

For social care workers and social rehabilitators in professional work there is a challenge to perform the services remotely, conducting interviews over the phone, if the holistic understanding of the situation will be developed by getting to know people in the particular setting, looking for the causes of their problems, finding solutions and adapting appropriate support - not only by criteria, but also by factors that may not be included in the criteria. And in relation with a professional purposes, it is recommended to evaluate the possibility of using SOPA (an information system for administering social aid and social services of local governments) software in practice to understand and record the situation of clients, transparency of professional networking.

Students of the study field Social Welfare are provided with various types of support, for example, first-year integration events, scholarships, various explanations on issues topical to the student, including information about social issues, Erasmus opportunities. There are also available the consultations, experience workshops, various types of professional training, exchange trips to other partner universities, getting to know the study process elsewhere, participating in lectures, discussions and master classes, getting acquainted with the university work environment and material and technical resources, visiting social care institutions. In the assessment report of the college a visit from partner universities' representatives (e.g. AWO Bildungszentrum Tretenhof (Germany)) is mentioned, which is also useful for college's students, as it helps to improve communication and foreign language skills, promotes new social networking development and certainly encourages students to use mobility opportunities. The LU PSMC contribution to the

organization of described processes, which require proactivity and real work input, is appreciable.

It is positively assessed, that innovative solutions and technical improvements are implemented into the study process, material technical base has been improved, new data bases (EBSCO) have been purchased. During the visit experts had a chance to get feedback about implementation of innovative solutions in collaboration with placement institutions, which is an example of good practice when not only students widen their competencies during the placement, but also placement institutions gain new information from students and find resources for improvement of services. The positive feedback was given about the director of the study field in the role of a lecturer.

Experts notes that could be useful to harmonize the professions required in the labor market at national level with those at international level; in this way, greater openness to the European space would be created by having professionals trained in professions that are also found in other systems, in the European system, for example, under different denominators, e.g. re-adaptation (rather than rehabilitation) sciences.

In general, experts support the LU PSMC internationalization policy and following the direction to gain more international experience and bring it to Latvia. Recommended to create international cooperation agreements starting with small-scale contact steps, for example, to agree that foreign university lecturers will share their experience in the field and the most valuable recommendations remotely, to agree on mutual cooperation of students, to involve students in searching for contact points, to create joint projects, and present them outside the college. Involving students and empowering them to develop interesting initiatives themselves will help to find resources to expand the college's expertise in the field of social welfare.

LU PSMC offers the opportunities to effectively synchronise study programs in the study field "Social Welfare" with Latvian higher education institutions in order to expand the opportunities for students to continue their bachelor's studies in Latvia in the field of social work after graduating from college. To ensure that college graduates can enter higher education in their 2nd or 3rd year of studies without making their studies excessively long.

To achieve better publicity about the significance and importance of the practitioners' work in the field by promoting cooperation with other similar study programmes and work environment, LU PSMC facilitating communication in society about the essentials, about concern for society, vulnerable groups and how skillfully and ethically provide this support, giving examples of good practice. Seek support also in those sectors where financial income is disproportionately high compared to social welfare. Evidence-based reviews suggest that no economic development can lead to the long-term well-being of society without real care for fellow human beings.

Experts in general positively evaluated and highly appreciated the great contribution of LU PSMC to the development of the industry, the good organization of studies and training, the actual study course structure with relevant content and close relationship between theory and practice.

The experts wish effort and good luck with continuously cultivating true, ethical, human loving values in students by showing good example.

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

### **Analysis**

The college has defined its operational goal, development goal, quality policy goal and also the goal of the study field, highlighting in general the priorities as balanced development, cooperation, competence, coherence, highly qualified, competent and competitive specialists based on labor market requirements and using modern teaching methods and achievements in research and science. The study programs fully correspond to the social welfare study field. The study field and the study programs correspond to the directions of strategic development of the college, to the needs of the society and national economy and development tendencies.

The actualized strategy of the college was not available to the experts, but in the strategy of the University of Latvia (Annex 1 mentions that the strategy will be available electronically on the server of the University of Latvia after approval, a draft is available in paper format) the college is not mentioned. The SAR states that the goal of development planning to promote the sustainability and stable development of LU PSMC in order to implement the mission and vision of the University of Latvia and achieve strategic goals. In general, the experts appreciate that the college's activities show progress towards the goal. (Annex 3, Development plan of the study field 3\_ANNEX\_Management\_Of\_The\_Study\_Field.pdf, Annual public reports of P. Stradins Medical College of the University of Latvia <https://www.psk.lu.lv/par-koledzu/parskati>).

The management structure of the college is described, it is comprehensive, mutually complementary and complies with the regulatory framework of the Republic of Latvia. Characteristics 1.2. Paragraph 1 includes a description of the powers of the representatives of the administration, but does not include a reflection of the involvement of the involved academic staff and students or any of the responsibilities involved in the decision-making processes.

Experts assessed that the structure of the college is oriented towards the development of the study field. However, content analysis does not give an idea about effective decision-making. During the experts' visit it was possible to appreciate the positive cooperation, support and unity involved in the management of the college and the implementation of the programs, which gave the impression that the compact management apparatus of the college is working very well. In general, it can be concluded that the support provided by the administrative and technical staff ensures the needs of the study programs corresponding to the study field.

The college has established a comprehensible, regulatory-compliant system and procedures for the admission of students, the recognition of study periods, professional experience, prior formal and non-formal learning, and the assessment of student achievement and learning outcomes, which are logical and effective. In its self-assessment report (SAR, SAR, Part II, Chapter 1.1., Annexes 2 and 4.), the college has very clearly reflected the experience with recognition of study courses by using statistical examples and explaining the reasons for different situations at different stages.

The possibility of recognizing experience should be encouraged, as it can make it easier for people already employed in the sector to obtain a diploma in education.

The LU PSMC, as stated, has no real instrument in place to detect plagiarism. All final qualification papers are available electronically, which would make it easier to detect plagiarism, and checking for plagiarism work together with the University of Latvia. Given the widespread practice of plagiarism in many educational systems, it would be advised to have a stronger procedure in place. As stated in point 7.1. of SAR, in order to promote more effective control on study papers, LU PSC plans to develop a clearly defined procedure for plagiarism in cooperation with the University of Latvia by joining the Unified Computerised Plagiarism Control System. However, the experts have not been able to obtain information on when this is planned and there are no specific indications in the development plan.

The college website contains information about the study programs corresponding to the study field,

all information corresponds to the information available in the official registers and provides applicants and students with important data. The content of the College's website is to be welcomed for its transparency and versatility. It is commendable that information about the professions of both study programmes in the study field, as such is also included, should be appreciated that the information is also available in English. According to the experts opinion, information about the professions to be acquired, the study process, study content, as well as student feedback and experience stories could be reflected even more widely on the website, as it would help prospective applicants to make their decision based on clear understanding of possible choices.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The management of the study field is transparent and efficient, it is implemented in close cooperation with the management of the LU PSMC. The activities of the study field are focused on the directions of strategic development of the college, they are oriented towards the development of the study field. The established procedures for the admission of students, the recognition of the study period, professional experience, previously acquired formal and non-formal education are in accordance with the legislation. The college follows the principles of academic integrity, evaluates them as important and develops their implementation, for example, plans to develop the use of appropriate anti-plagiarism tools. The information available on the college's website corresponds to that available in the official registers and provides relevant information.

Strengths:

1. Legal requirements are followed;
2. A well-designed college website is a good platform for informing applicants and students;

Weaknesses:

1. Plagiarism policy needs to be further developed.

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

### **Analysis**

As followed from in SAR available and during the visit received information, the quality policy in LU PSMC is established in rudimentary manner - the main document describing the internal quality system is document "The Quality Policy", which postulates five principles that are to be taken into account when implementing activities of quality assurance - competence, partnerships, sustainability, cooperation and strategy. But, LU PSMC is lacking any strategy or policy planning documents which include aims, goals and tasks that could help in decision making processes. Also the institution lacks any definition of KPI's or relevant metrics to measure success of activities or overall quality of implemented processes. This severely impacts decision making capacity of the college by lacking the benchmark, on what activities must be focused on, within the institution to set its further strategic priorities. Main quality assurance activities as described in SAR "Description of the study direction 1.3" are various departmental staff meetings and staff, employer, graduate and student surveys. By experts formed the impression, that the college prides itself on being small, close-knitted without useless administrative burden. Even though informal culture is one of the main tenets of quality, during visitation it seems that there is a lack of common understanding of greater strategy, priorities and quality assurance principles. The college in general has established a quality policy.

As proofed, improvement of the study field and existing study programmes in LU PSMC takes place regularly. Study courses and study programmes are evaluated by students every year. Students'

opinions are obtained using questionnaires. Yet during the visit there was insufficient proof that there are activities or improvements that followed those feedbacks on a consistent basis across all departments and staff. Although it is worth noting that there are some individual lecturers who have a good track record of building rapport with students and enacting provable improvements or changes to the study process following relevant feedback. The feedback mechanisms have been defined and they are logical and available for all stakeholders. Partially efficient as there is a lack of good track record of changes made following the feedback.

The college, as provided in SAR and viewed by experts, collects various data points mainly from aforementioned feedback surveys from students and graduates. In addition, mobility statistics, research activity statistics and other data are being collected on “reasons for dropping out” and “performance indicators for lifelong learning services” which is being collected once a year. Data is taken into account in decision making processes. Apart from formal data collection there is also student mentorship in place - each student class receives a mentor from staff who acts as a contact point in all administrative and study process questions between students and institution. This practice is well received and is commendable as it enables ease of access to administrative questions to all students. Also this practice enables a more direct way of communication and data collection regarding issues at hand. The college collects and analyses the information of the study field.

The connection of SWOT analysis with the development plan of the study field is well shown (Annex 3, Development plan of the study field 3\_ANNEX\_Management\_Of\_The\_Study\_Field.pdf, and Annual public reports of P. Stradins Medical College of the University of Latvia <https://www.psk.lu.lv/par-koledzu/parskati>). A more realistic, concrete description of the activities and deadlines of the development plan of the direction would have made a clearer, more perceptible picture of the further development plans of the LU PSMC. However, it can also be seen from another angle. The development and implementation of the plan involves particular people responsible for cascading the tasks defined in the plan to certain employees, as indicated in the self-assessment report. It is also indicated that in the process of implementation of tasks, feedback is provided to the management. It follows that the participants involved have the opportunity to plan the implementation of the set goals themselves, being closer to the real situation. From this point of view, the approach is very appropriate. However, the problem remains, because if the specific steps in the development plan are not planned and marked, they may not be implemented, it is not clear to external experts what exact actions will be taken. Additionally, as the experts have also described in their opinion, when researching the activities of the LU PSMC, including the annual report published on the LU PSMC website, it can be concluded that the data are indeed being carried out and displayed in the report. It would be advisable to find a solution - in order to make the development plan more concrete in the future with real actions, as well as to have regular review of how the set goals have been achieved. This would lead to better and more professional process management.

The college has identified standards and pays special attention to implementation of a student-centered approach (ESG 2015 1.3) and quality assurance policy (ESG 2015 1.1). In general it is agreeable and falls in line with the overall impression of the institution. In SAR, part 2.4., college highlights various different challenges identified - digitalization of studies, promoting development of students' critical thinking, improving research activities, evolving study programmes taking into account life-long learning principles, cooperation with external stakeholders and work on recognizability and study attractivity for new students. Even though this indicates that college has strategic plans in place, it lacks a certain plan of action how those challenges will be met. In general experts agree that college has identified standards set forth by ESG that require special attention.

The development plan of the study field includes a number of valuable tasks for further development, however, the activities to be performed are not specified, the deadlines and the results to be achieved are generalized. It was not possible for the experts to get acquainted with what has been done and implemented in each of the generically formulated points during the reporting period. It would be advisable to use the development plan more analytically, which would help both – to see progress more clearly and for external experts to be sure of what has been done so far and what is planned for the future. A positive example of the result to be achieved in the formulation is “Increase the number of lecturers who can communicate freely in a foreign language by 5% every year”, however, experts do not have the opportunity to see whether this is already being done for the whole period or whether these are development plans for the future. However, in the context of this goal, it is acknowledged that the college has provided a summary of the activities carried out by the lecturers to develop their competence (Annex Assessment of the growth and qualification improvement of the teaching staff, Table 3.5.).

However, the review processes of the study field and programs in LU PSMC have been developed over a long period of time, publishing reports on the previous year on the website <https://www.psk.lu.lv/par-koledzu/parskati> (in Latvian). The reports (available from 2013-2020) include information about the college as a whole and also include information on study field. The reports allowed to get acquainted with the activities in the study field to be evaluated and gave a good idea of the specific activities of the college during the year. The report clearly shows information on the further education of lecturers, the mobility of students and lecturers, foreign guest lectures and the solutions found in order to organize lectures by foreign guest lecturers remotely. Information is provided on specific activities of Students Union, activities in projects, in cooperation with employers, information measures about study programs, etc. The reports provide open and accessible information on the actual day-to-day running of the college and it can be praised how the college completes this task.

It is positively assessed that mobility goals of the LU PSMC are clearly set, with the goal of student mobility to reach 5% of the total number of students in 2021-2027, and increase the number of students participating in the activities of the ERASMUS + programme, as well as increase mobility indicators of the college teaching staff, which are currently - as mentioned - an average of 15 people to 20 lecturers going abroad per year. In general, the clarity at the college level is commendable, but it is advisable to be even more specific - as to what refers specifically to the Social welfare study field.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

LU PSMC has a defined quality policy concept and maintains a quality assurance approach that helps to accumulate and make transparent the college's actual contribution each year. The system can be improved by finding the way how quality development is planned and its implementation is measured. The review processes of study programs, as well as the mechanisms for obtaining feedback from students, graduates and employers are defined and available to all involved parties. The college regularly collects and analyses information about study programmes, however, it is difficult to assess exactly how the obtained information is used to improve the field of study. It is commendable that the college has identified the standards of Part 1 of the ESG, which need to be paid special attention to improve the performance of the study programs corresponding to the field of study, and the goals and activities that appear in the development plan of the field of study have been defined. Complementing the development plan with real actions to achieve the goals and evaluating the implementation of the plan would make the quality improvement process more visible and realistic.

Strengths:

1. Small and agile staff and management. Opportunities to quickly implement changes.
2. Transparency of the study process and its improvement work in the report available on the website for the previous year.
3. Close and good contact to the labour market;
4. Apart from formal data collection there is also student mentorship in place - each student group receives a mentor from staff who acts as a contact point in all administrative and study process questions between students and institution

Weaknesses:

1. No real clear quality assessment policies with relevant metrics to measure implemented activities available, policy planning documents are not sufficiently detailed.
2. The development plan of the study field does not include specific activities in achieving the goals, it is too general.

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

#### **Analysis**

The necessary financing required for the implementation of the LU PSMC study field "Social Welfare" is mainly covered by the state covering a study fee for a set number of students of the study field. Other sources of finance are revenue from providing services and projects financed by the EU. College has a system in place for overlooking expenditure divided by categories, e.g. cost of wage for the academic staff.

Unfortunately, due to state financed studies, some evidence is missing regarding a thorough system that should be in place for required finances – at least the minimal required budget – for both programmes to be successfully implemented. Moreover all the risks related to this matter should be clearly accounted. Since this main income for the college is strictly linked to the number of students whose study fee is covered by the state and since in the recent years the student number has decreased, it is important for the college to have a system in place for monitoring closely to the available finances to cover everything that is needed for the study field's implementation. In this situation, the college's benefit is, that it is an agency of a bigger higher education institution, i.e. University of Latvia and therefore more flexibility can be arranged in a worst case scenario of student numbers decreasing even more.

The college has adequate infrastructure resources in use and the material and technical provisions that ensure the implementation of the study field are available for the implementation of the study programmes. The study programs, especially Social Care program, require specific equipment and facilities, therefore it is satisfactory that LU PSMC has not only all the computer hardware in place but also specific equipment that is used in college for providing social care. For purchasing material, technical, methodological, and other goods or services for improving the study process for the students and academic staff, the college has a procurement policy in place. This policy regulates the procedure of the procurement process as well as the operation of a procurement commission.

LU PSMC has a good culture of support for the staff, who state to have access to international and national documentation and having access to support for improvement of teaching skills, such as access to conferences. Teaching staff also have the possibility to go abroad, but these possibilities are used in a limited manner.

The process of attracting of teachers to LU PSMC is based on a series of internal normative acts that



regulate the selection procedures, the workload, the modalities of improvement and the internal or external mobility, for example: Regulations on Academic and Administrative Positions, Procedures for Hiring and Firing Employees, Accounting and Planning Procedures for Workload of the Academic Staff (SAR). This information is published in the "Latvijas Vēstnesis" and displayed on the college's website and is accessible to all candidates: <https://www.psk.lu.lv/par-koledzu/vakances> (Annex 1).

The college has established fair and open procedures related to the recruitment, performance and evaluation of teaching staff, ensuring high quality standards, in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The annual assessment of the quality of staff by the head of the program and administration, as reviewed, is based on several tools: student survey results, quality of courses, scientific activities and participation in projects, compliance with disciplinary programs, communication skills with students and administration, the number of possible complaints. LU PSK encourages teachers to improve their professional training by accessing master's and doctoral programs. The college also provides financial support to doctoral students for participation in international and national scientific conferences, and the publication of scientific papers / publications in internationally recognized and cited databases (by covering fees).

Experts agree, that in the "Social Welfare" study field, the qualifications of college teaching staff are in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia, Education and Vocational Education.

The relation between the staff and the students within study field is very close and supportive. Students comment that their needs and their questions are taken into account. For instance because of Covid-19 the structure of the program was changed to better adjust the situation to the need of the students.

LU PSMC has identified and provides students with a functional support system in the Jurmala and the Rezekne branch.

Thus, in academic support, information is provided on the organization of studies, information on self-government, collaboration with the Ethics Commission or financial support. During their studies, the students have the possibility to apply for scholarships (minimum scholarship, a one-time grant or a scholarship during maternity leave). Students are also informed about ERASMUS + mobility and study opportunities at partner universities.

In SAR mentioned and by experts made sure, the students of the LU PSMC study field "Social Welfare" receive academic assistance, support for career development and psychological support. For the good development of the academic process and the promotion of quality, the college identifies the needs of students through surveys and offers adequate solutions.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The LU PSMC has adequate infrastructure resources in use, the material and technical provisions that ensure the implementation of the study field are available for the implementation of the study programs. Support structures for both, teaching staff and students, are in place for effective study work.

In the "Social Welfare" study field of LU PSMC the qualifications of teaching staff are in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia, Education and Vocational Education.

LU PSMC has identified and provides students and staff with academic assistance, support for career development and psychological support.

Strengths:

1. An adequate infrastructure resources in use and the material and technical provisions, special equipment is available since this is a medical college;

Weaknesses:

1. The college does not stimulate mobility and other forms of improving the knowledge of teaching staff by allocating financial funds and own resources;
2. A relatively small number of teachers and students are involved in Erasmus programs.

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

##### **Analysis**

Since all in the LU PSMC study field "Social Welfare" implemented study programs are 1st level professional higher education programs, the emphasis is more on entering the labour market and not scientific research, although some system for implementing applied research are crucial for the added value of the study programmes. In the study programs research is incorporated in a form of study courses rather than separate research projects therefore extra budget is not necessarily required.

The directions of applied and scientific research assessed as good – publications (1-5 per year); conferences (college own and participating in conferences, even inter-disciplinary ones, due to SAR and Annexes). The college is open for collaborations with the industry: publicly inviting the professional associations to sign up for a collaborations – without specifying what a collaboration would look like in practice.

Experts mention, that the college has the unused potential – to work more closely with other academic staff from the University of Latvia and even dive into more interdisciplinary fields with them. In general, examples of good practice show that in the LU PSMC are employed persons, that have good understanding of the industry and ready to share their experiences that could be useful in dealing with this situation.

As 1st level professional studies, the study process is primarily targeted at preparing the students professionally for entering the labour market right after graduation, also ensuring that there is no employee shortage in these evidently important jobs. It is satisfactory that the college is open for collaborating with the professional associations in a form of involvement in developing research topics for the students. This gives an opportunity to bridge theoretical knowledge gained during the study process with more timely topics straight from the industry.

The need for methodological materials in the industry in general is a topical problem and is positive assessed, that the teaching staff of the college are involved in their creation (Appendix 8. List of teaching staff publications, patents, artistic creation works for the reporting period). The lack of such materials is still noticeable, therefore college input in its implementation is important.

The international projects carried out during the period reported by LU PSK ensure an efficient international collaboration and cooperation, necessary for the development of the activities within the program and which provide training for social work specialists working with different categories of people in difficulty. LU PSMC study field "Social Welfare" teaching staff persons participated in four projects managed by the European Union programs - ERASMUS + and Nordplus, which allows the improvement and consolidation of teachers' professional skills and, implicitly, the knowledge taught by them to students, what is notable fact.

During the evaluated period, several research projects were highlighted, ERASMUS + and Nordplus, in which students of the programs were involved, for example, the NORDPLUS Project "Study quality in terms of multiculturalism in the Baltic Countries" (period 09.2017 - 12. 2018), "Higher education student and staff mobility between Program and Partner Countries" (period 01.06.2017. - 30.08.2018). The participation of teachers and students in the international projects ERASMUS + and Nordplus, allows access to current information and integrates innovative solutions in the teaching and study process.

LU PSMC develops its mechanisms for involving teaching staff in scientific research. For the period 2021-2027, the institution approved, according to the Erasmus University Charter in Higher Education in the internationalization program, a plan for participation in international projects in accordance with the purpose of the study program.

The research activity is highlighted in the teachers' publications and in the participation in various conferences (ANNEX 8 List of publications, patents, artistic creativity projects of teaching staff during the reporting period). The scientific research is carried out according to the strategies approved by the Scientific Council and in accordance with the Regulations of the College, annually allocating the necessary resources in the budget planning process of LU PSK. These scientific strategies include the priority research areas for the study programs.

A conference in the field of Social welfare (and health) is taking place every year in the college and brings students and the academic staff together presenting their own research. In addition the college collaborates with other medical colleges in Latvia in order to bring together students and academic staff via sharing their findings from the research that they have done. This way the involved get to share their knowledge and gain new knowledge from other (academic) shareholders of this field in Latvia. It shouldn't take long for a closer collaboration in research projects and creating co-publications to develop within this field.

Due to SAR and information obtained during the expert on-site visit was applied the realistic in terms of the research orientation of the college. The programs are focused on practice and the research orientation could not stay very limited and developed to be comparable with other programs of similar level in Europe.

During the interviews were given good feedback and positive examples of innovations in the study process in the study field. Successful co-operation with employers' organisations and mutual benefits in learning new technologies were also pointed out.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

LU PSMC has developed the mechanisms for the involvement of teaching staff in applied scientific research, practical, specific to the level of studies.

The study programs are in the study field are 1st level professional higher education studies and professionally prepare students for entry into the labor market immediately after graduation, closely linked to professional associations and develop applied research topics for students.

There also linked the theoretical knowledge acquired during the study process with current topics directly from the labor market.

Collaboration with employers' organizations that bring mutual benefits in learning and applying knowledge and new technologies organized successfully.

Strengths:

1. Incentive of the college to organize conference every year;

2. Cooperation with employers' organizations not only promotes the growth of student`s practical skills, but also helps the organizations to innovate and to promote the acquisition of new resources for more efficient provision of their services;
3. The participation of teachers and students in the international projects ERASMUS + and Nordplus, allows access to current information and integrates innovative solutions in the teaching and study process.

Weaknesses:

1. The programs are focused on practice, the research orientation is limited to 1st level of studies and does not offer a wider openness to the field of social welfare.

## **5. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

### **Analysis**

The LU PSMC has good cooperation with institutions on the labour market and with other institutions in Latvia. There is also a collaboration with several institutions in other countries, and guest lecturers come to teach in the course:

- The Erasmus program involves international collaborations, but only with those universities that have such training programs, at the 1st level vocational higher education, which limits the number of agreements concluded with other universities.

- Teacher participation in international conferences: most teacher participation is in national conferences; perhaps the program does not lead to a higher interest of teachers or does not motivate them enough to participate in international conferences; a clearer social orientation may motivate teachers or an annual system of teacher evaluation by the institution's management or by students.

For example, for the period 2018/2019, there were 3 mobilities with Lääne-Viru College, Estonia; Oulu University of Applied Sciences, Finland; Cappadocia University, Turkey; for the period 2019./2020, 5 mobilities, IES No.1 of Gijon, Spain; Kauno University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania; SOSU, Denmark. (see ANNEX 7 Statistics on outgoing mobility of teachers during the reported period and ANNEX 9 List of collaboration agreements).

However, a clear strategy of internationalisation seems to be missing: it was stated during visit that 'all collaboration' is good, which indicates there is not a clear perspective on the 'sort' of institutions the college wants to collaborate with. Of course this is also driven by language barriers and structures of programs and as such there is an orientation towards Germany and Scandinavian countries.

The college has a system for the provision and organisation of traineeships in place, including a sufficient number of professional institutions where students can choose to apply for an internship. However, for the sake of improving the internship program for greater impact on student acquired professional skills and abilities, a more diversified offer of the internship program should be developed. This would include a requirement for the students to choose a place of internship outside of their employment place if they are already active in the labour market. Also ensuring that students acquire as diversified experiences as possible, making sure to include more than one place for the internship.

In addition, a clear strategy for staying up to date with the shifting environment of the so-called 'silver economy' should be implemented in the study field, including innovative ways for students to experience this via internships in the professional environment. This also could be implemented by including study visits to professional institutions and even more so by promoting mobility for

internships abroad and strengthening collaboration with other higher education institutions and professional institutions, including international collaborations.

In an analysis outside the specific national cultural system, it seems that the programs in the study field are directed towards the medical direction and not towards the social one. The two specializations (social care worker and social rehabilitator) have some areas of action on a practical level that overlap. Outside the Latvian education system, it seems to be that there is a very thin line between the two specializations; and it can be that in practice, these issues are even more difficult to define.

It may be appropriate to harmonize the professions required in the labor market at the national level with those at the international level. In this way, a greater openness to the European space would be created, being trained specialists in professions that are also found in other systems, in the European system, for example, under different denominators, e.g. readaptation (instead of rehabilitation) sciences.

It is commendable that the coverage of internships is very wide, it helps both students and the college in general to get to know different experiences in internships.

Evaluating the college's cooperation with other Latvian higher education institutions, it can be mentioned that such an agreement on the possibility for graduates to continue their studies in the bachelor's program Social Work could also be with Latvian higher education institutions (as the college has concluded with Uteno University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania).

Although it is mentioned in the SAR that co-operation is also with other Latvian higher education institutions, the experts do not have more specific information. Cooperation with local universities could be further developed, incl. creating joint student projects and activities in the social field, sharing experiences with teachers, organizing joint workshops, conducting joint research and publishing.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

In LU PSMC Social Welfare study field are developed a procedure and an Internationalization plan on the number of mobility, entry and exit of teachers and students, depending on the funding allocated to each program. The selection and application procedure for these mobilities is posted on the college's website [www.psk.lu.lv](http://www.psk.lu.lv). The information is updated periodically.

The coverage of the internships for students is very wide and helps the students to know different experiences in these internships.

The college offers different opportunities for students to develop and choose a career later by accessing various institutions on the labor market in internships.

Strengths:

1. Existing good collaboration practices with professional institutions for internships;
2. A wide range of internships, which helps to network and promotes both the development of work institutions and the students' and college's perception of the internship environment.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of diversity of experiences gained after internships, clearly differentiated for the two specializations: social care worker and social rehabilitator;
2. The Erasmus program involves international collaborations, especially with those universities that

have such training programs, at the level of vocational higher education, which limits the number of partnerships;

3. Teacher participation in international conferences: most teacher participation is in national conferences and less to international conferences.

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

### **Analysis**

Recommendations given in the previous accreditation of study field during the reference period can be summarized in following points:

- "Scientific research (creative) work of the academic staff is related to study courses taught" and "Connection of study programmes with the scientific research (creative) work is ensured (involvement of teaching staff in scientific research grants, research programmes of the respective field, connection of the HEI / study programme with research centers of national significance)."

Even though there have been some research projects, it seems that only part of the staff takes an active role in those activities. LU PSMC lacks a certain policy or incentive structure to motivate research activities. As this recommendation is vague, there should be developed KPIs on how implementation of this criteria can be measured. Recommendation can be considered as completed, but must be implemented constantly in order to stay actual.

- "Academic staff and students participate in scientific conferences and / or creative "

Academic staff and students do participate in various research related activities although scope and research level varies greatly. Recommendation can be considered completed during this assessment, but must be implemented constantly with demonstrable results in order to stay compliant in long-term perspective.

- "Professionalism of the academic staff corresponds to the content of the study programme activities."

College must continue to further qualification of its staff by providing opportunities and supporting participation in seminars, conferences and other research and educational activities. Recommendation can be considered as completed.

- "Library funds, their equipment and services ensure achievement of study results and create a positive study environment (including availability of library funds in foreign languages)."

Library resources and their equipment is in good order and ensures a positive study environment. Recommendation can be considered as completed.

- "Results of the research work are published in internationally available and peer-reviewed publications; there is a practical use of the results of scientific research and creative work, including innovative activities."

Participation of lecturers in Latvian and international conferences, preparation and publication of scientific publications has been supported and some of the staff members have relevant publications within the field. Recommendation can be considered completed during this assessment, but must be implemented constantly with demonstrable results in order to stay compliant.

- "Students have an opportunity to acquire certain modules, subjects and / or practices (fully or partially) in other foreign HEI study programmes, for example through existing cooperation agreements on joint implementation of SP and / or modules, on the exchange of lecturers"

Students have the opportunity to participate in exchange activities abroad. College has a provable

record of outgoing mobility, yet cooperation with other local institutions regarding previous recommendation criteria could be at a deeper level. Recommendation can be considered as completed.

- "A joint programme with one of the higher education institutions is being developed or planned." Graduates have the possibility to continue education in Lithuania and continuous work in the field of inter institutional cooperation is being made. Recommendation can be considered as completed.

Previous recommendations have been implemented. It is positive that the college also takes these recommendations into account in its future development plans, as growth is a process.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

Previous recommendations were mainly concerned with research capabilities and performance within the college - mainly - requiring to pay more attention to participation in research activities and ensuring that research interests of staff are aligned with curriculum. There is acknowledged that research is not the top priority of LU PSMC as its focus as far as the study field goes is preparation of qualified specialists within the framework of 1st level higher education. Yet as College is part of the higher education system and not of vocational school system, research is expected and college must continue to develop its policies and activities to ensure higher level of participation of its staff and students within research.

Previous recommendations have been implemented. It is positive that the college also takes these recommendations into account in its future development plans, as growth is a process.

Strengths:

1. Library and its provisions are in good shape and creates a positive study environment.

Weaknesses:

1. Participation in research activities of staff and students could be at a higher level.
2. Cooperation with other HEIs could be at a higher level.

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

- 1 R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The criterion is assessed as fulfilled, as the requirements of Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education of the Law on Higher Education Institutions are implemented.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The College's internal quality assurance systems include policies and procedures for ensuring the quality of higher education, and a mechanism for monitoring and periodically reviewing the implementation of study programs has been developed (as evidenced by the information published in the reports section of the College's website).

Conceptual experts believe that the general principles of quality should be implemented through more clearly defined action plans and measures of their implementation, in order to have a

clearer picture of how a policy is followed by a particular action.

(3\_ANNEX\_Management\_Of\_The\_Study\_Field.pdf, Annual public reports of P. Stradins Medical College of the University of Latvia <https://www.psk.lu.lv/par-koledzu/parskati>).

- 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

Based on the information in SAR, incl. Part I 1.4. and the information available on the college website, the existing annual evaluation of the study programs takes place in the annual report of the study field. The report is available on the college's website (Annual public reports of P. Stradins Medical College of the University of Latvia <https://www.psk.lu.lv/par-koledzu/parskati>). All the procedures for the development and review of existing programs in the study field are logical and efficient. Procedures for the approval and refreshing of programs are established. Data is being collected regularly.

The college practices such criteria, conditions and procedures for the assessment of students' progress that allow to verify the achievement of the intended study results.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Various documents describing evaluation procedures, conditions and criteria are readily available at the webpage. These regulations are consistent and efficient.

The documents that govern how the college ensures that information about student progress is collected and analyzed are described in SAR and listed in Annex 1.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The SAR provides examples (Annex Assessment of the growth and qualification improvement of the teaching staff, Table 3.5. (section: attachments attached by the applicant)), which shows that certain procedures have been established for the improvement of the qualification of the academic staff and ensuring the quality of work.

Information on work efficiency of the academic staff, available study resources and their costs, and significant indicators of the college's activities provided in SAR.

- 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

College regularly collects, analyses and submits statistical data on relevant study programs according to regulatory enactments and internal regulations. The internal statistical information – the results of the surveys from students, graduates, employers and teachers are processed.

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



**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Based on the information in the SAR, incl. Part I 1.4. and the information available on the college website, the existing annual evaluation of the study programs takes place in the annual report of the study field.

The annual report is available on the college's website (Annual public reports of P. Stradins Medical College of the University of Latvia <https://www.psk.lv/par-koledzu/parskati>).

The LU PSMC points out that the annual surveys of students, graduates and employers and their analysis ensure the continuous improvement, development and efficiency of the study field. The annual report, which is regularly developed and approved by the Senate of the University of Latvia and published on the website of the University of Latvia PSK, summarizes and analyses the activities performed according to common criteria applied annually. The college also refers to the periodic re-accreditation of the study field, which provides international evaluation.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The College has developed and extensive cooperation with institutions in Latvia to provide internships, which is also the main goal in the implementation of the field of study, so the evaluation is appropriate. Cooperation with foreign universities is well established through ERASMUS activities and needs to continue to develop.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

LU PSMC has developed the mechanisms for the involvement of teaching staff in applied scientific research, practical, specific to the level of educational training.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The LU PSMC has taken measures to eliminate the shortcomings identified during the previous evaluation of the study field. During previous evaluation the recommendations focuses mainly towards the need of strengthening research and scientific capacity. College has implemented activities to fulfill those recommendations. The experts' team sees more importance to continue to work in the direction of implementing of recommendations considering internships abroad and cooperation with other HEIs in Latvia - with focus towards harmonization of study programs so that graduates can successfully continue studies in other institutions afterwards.

## 8. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

To set clear and detailed relevant metrics to measure implemented activities available for study quality assessment activities.

To improve and further develop the plagiarism control policy in the college.

To review and supplement a module for the development of business professional competencies with more relevance to social work or general topicality of study field, improving the description of the entrepreneurship course, including topics relevant to the industry, such as social entrepreneurship.

To make course descriptions available to students, promoting the use of lecturer and student course descriptions to achieve study results.

### **Long-term recommendations**

Consider using the Moodle system, which has free versions and which would help the college maintain study materials, advance digital skills for both lecturers and students, and allow options of keeping information about study courses in one place, structuring materials by topics with different resources, assessment options, feedback options, integration with anti - plagiarism tools.

Continue to digitize data in order to avoid unnecessary administrative burdens for yourselves and also to facilitate students' daily lives.

Carry out an analysis and self-assessment of the development plan and of what specific actions have been taken in the development of the study field, using statistical summaries of the achievement of goals. It is also recommended to plan more precisely the actions to be taken for the development of the field. Experts recommend that this approach is maintained in the future, so that the achievements and planned next steps can be clearly and analytically assessed.

To share, as far as possible, stories of good practice both on study time and on practice in the fields of social rehabilitation and social care on the Internet in order to promote the recognition and prestige of these professions in society.

Consider expanding study opportunities in part-time studies to enable more experienced students working in the profession.

## **II. "Social Rehabilitation" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "Social Rehabilitation" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

The 1st level professional higher education study program "Social Rehabilitation" has been established in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation no.141 of March 20, 2001, Regulations on the State First Level Professional Higher Education Standard, the Classification of Professions of the Republic of Latvia and internal regulatory enactments of LU PSMC.

Study program "Social Rehabilitation" (classification code 41762) is organized in form of full time studies, with duration of 2 years (4 semesters), volume of 80 credits (CP), 120 ECTS.

Study program implementation language is Latvian, main place of studies is in Jurmala city, Vidus prospect 38, other implementation place – LU PSMC branch in Rēzekne city.

As admission requirement is defined the secondary education, that focused on student candidates with previous general secondary education or the secondary vocational (professional) education.

At the end of the study program and successful final test and the defence of the qualification paper is provided the diploma for the first level professional higher education, which also confirms the acquired fourth level of professional qualification, and Social rehabilitator obtained qualification.

Admission rules, goals and planned results of the Social Rehabilitation study program have been developed and defined in compliance with the principles of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). As a result, providing a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow to carry out a qualified social services process in accordance with the professional standard, and provide an opportunity for further studies in bachelor's and second level professional higher education Social Work study programmes in Latvia and other European countries.

Overview of tasks of the study program and professional knowledge, skills and competences as results of study program shows, that the results are formulated to wide and experts recommend to review this points for better focus on the Social rehabilitator profession. Experts should point out that the quality agency recommends that 6-9 achievable study results are formulated for the study program (AIKA publication: <https://www.aika.lv/ieteikumi-raksturojuma-pasnovertejuma-zinojuma-sagatavosanai/> source about study results: [https://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Studiju-rezult%C4%81tu-formul%C4%93%C5%A1ana-un-izmanto%C5%A1ana\\_praktisk%C4%81-rokasgr%C4%81mata.pdf](https://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Studiju-rezult%C4%81tu-formul%C4%93%C5%A1ana-un-izmanto%C5%A1ana_praktisk%C4%81-rokasgr%C4%81mata.pdf)). It is possible that individual study results may be combined to follow good practice promoted by the Agency.

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

The name of the LU PSMC study field "Social welfare" study programme "Social Rehabilitation", the diploma and the professional qualification to be acquired, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. The study program tasks and results are defined well, but could be reviewed on fact of reduction of number and combining of clarifications.

Strengths:

1. Compliance with the requirements of the regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia;
2. Stability, invariability and topicality of the programme.

Weaknesses:

Not identified

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

### **Analysis**

The study program "Social Rehabilitation" is carried out according to the level of education, in accordance with the national legislation related to the 1st level vocational higher education and is carried out normally, in full time form, in 2 years (4 semesters), with 80 credit (CP), 120 ECTS credit (ANNEX 22 Compliance of Social Rehabilitation study programme to national education standard). These standards are met in the education of students in Jurmala and Rezekne branch.

Compliance study programme Social Rehabilitation with national education standards, that determine certain requirements related to the parts of the study programmes and their scope

(compulsory, limited optional, optional), also the volume of the final work, LU PSMC provided in SAR, Annex 22 (CONTENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STUDIES). The compliance proofed and compared from experts by checking SAR and Annexes, including Annex 25 (Study plan of study program Social rehabilitation, approved by LU PSMC in 15th December, 2020): total volume of study courses 56CP (general study courses 20 CP, field study courses 36 CP), which is 70% of the total volume of the programme, volume of internship - 16 CP (Internship - 6 CP, Qualification practice - 10 CP), qualification paper 8 CP.

As required in regulations, in LU PSMC study program "Social Rehabilitation" content is included in compulsory part a module for the development of business professional competencies Entrepreneurship professional competence module (6 CP): Basics of business and project management - 2 CP, Legal bases and legal aspects of professional activity - 2 CP, Introduction to specialty and social dialogue - 2 CP (Annex 25). But, module "Entrepreneurship professional competence" could be geared more towards program as a whole. Meaning there are indications that there would be great appreciation of less of a dry business theory and more relevance to social work or general topicality of study field.

In Environmental Protection Law and Civil Protection and Disaster Management Law of the Republic of Latvia are regulated the special requirements to the studies related to the environmental protection course and civil protection course. LU PSMC study program "Social Rehabilitation" study plan contents study course Civil protection - 1 CP and study course Hygiene and environmental protection - 2 CP to fully comply with requirements (Annex 25).

The content of the study program corresponds to the professional standard of the profession "Social Rehabilitator", code of the profession - 341202. In Annex 23 "Compliance of professional qualification attained in Social Rehabilitation study programme with professional standard" is provided compliance with project of actualized professional standard aimed at harmonization the professional standard is in the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council of the National Tripartite Cooperation Council of Vocational education and employment (PINTSA). It is commendable that the college has invested in the renewal of the professional standard and ensures the compliance of the study program with the professional standard.

Study Regulations of the LU PSMC determine the basic information about the study content and the organization of the study process in all programs. Also in the Social Rehabilitation program, the procedure for examinations of study courses determines the types, form and course of examinations, as well as the rights and obligations of students and lecturers in the process of evaluating the results of the study course. The Regulations on State Final Examinations prescribe the procedure by which the state final examination for the acquisition of 1st level professional higher education programs for award of a qualification and the issuance of a diploma is organized.

Experts have obtained a notion that digital literacy is the weak link of the college which has significantly developed during the remote studies, but has not been implemented yet in organizing of study materials and using of anti-plagiarism tools. As it was mentioned during the experts' on-site visit, students receive study materials and lecturers' presentations via e-mail. It is advisable to evaluate the possibility to use Moodle base e-study platform or other equal free of charge programs for digitalisation of the study environment, clear organisation of study materials to motivate the lecturers to put their materials in order, to improve and develop them. Remarkable is to overcome stereotypes about futility of course descriptions and improve their accessibility for students.

The expert assessment visit showed that the college provides adequate implementation and

evaluation methods for all evaluated programs tended to achieve the goals of the study program. The college adapted very well to the Covid-19 situation by also offering blended education, while stressing the importance of face to face education for modules aimed at developing skills.

Student-centred learning and principles are taken into account. Some students state that there should be an opportunity for more internship moments. Yet the good and close relation with the institutions on the labour market offer excellent learning conditions, and people from practice are involved as teaching staff.

The relevance of the content of the study program is backed by the industry where students have their traineeships, after the traineeship period giving their feedback about the competencies of the students. Also the number of graduates that work in the field of social rehabilitation confirms that the content of the study program is indeed relevant.

Graduates are a great source of information for evaluating study process because they have actually experienced it and may not have self-censorship that the students may have, therefore it is of great value to get their insight of how to better a study programme and what (if anything) is missing content-wise from the perspective of the industry. For LU PSK to gather information about the study process from the most active students is recommended, e.g. regular meetings with student council to discuss relevant topics of study quality.

The study program offers students mobility in different universities in the country and in Europe (ANNEX 11 Statistics on student mobility). In the analyzed period 2013-2021, 20 students from the Social Rehabilitation Study Program left in the mobility program; for example, in the period 2019-2020, students went to: Tartu Health Care College, Estonia; St. Ignatius Loyola College, Lithuania; AWO Bildungszentrum Trettenhof, Germany; and in 2018-2019 to: Trakiya University Medical College Stara Zagora, Bulgaria; Tartu Health Care College, Estonia; AWO Bildungszentrum Trettenhof, Germany.

Students take advantage of mobility opportunities (incoming and outgoing) and develop their knowledge, skills and abilities to work with people in need. However the mobility activity has decreased, possible that the Covid-19 restrictions have had an impact. For this a recommendation would be to try new forms of knowledge exchange (online mobility, lectures online from lecturers from other institutions etc.).

It is positively assessed that mobility goals are clearly set, with the goal of student mobility to reach 5% of the total number of students in 2021-2027, and increase the number of students participating in the activities of the ERASMUS + program, as well as increase mobility indicators of the college teaching staff, which are currently - as mentioned - an average of 15 people to 20 lecturers going abroad per year. In general, the clarity at the college level is commendable, but it is advisable to be even more specific referred specifically to the Social welfare study field.

The results of student, employer and graduate surveys, which show generally good trends, are clearly presented in the SAR. However, the number of respondents involved in the surveys remained unclear, as only percentages that are not relevant practices in research and compilation of such surveys are used, as the survey may have been completed by 10 respondents, which is 100% - but these would not be reliable results for drawing conclusions. The college points out in the report that all the lecturers of the college are introduced to the overall results of the survey during the annual interviews and that improvements are made after the results of the survey, and solutions for improving the quality of the study process are sought. The results of the surveys are analysed by

the Study Programme Council of the Department of Social Care. There is no assurance that respondents are given feedback on their guidance and suggestions.

The study program has quality indicators satisfied: qualified teachers, good technical and material background, internships offered in cooperation with social service providers; thus ensuring a good correspondence between the content of courses of study and the trend of the labor market and the development of social services. The study program is equally implemented in Jurmala and Rezekne branch. The implementation of the study program in the branch in Rezekne is organized according to the same principles that Riga and the quality of studies are the same.

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

The study program is equally implemented in Jurmala and Rezekne. The content and implementation methods of study program "Social Rehabilitation" are carried out according to the level of education, in accordance with the national legislation. The study program has the quality indicators satisfied: qualified teachers, good technical and material background, internships offered in cooperation with social service providers. The relevance of the content of the study program is backed by the industry where students have their traineeships, after the traineeship period giving the feedback about the competencies of the students. The results of student, employer and graduate surveys, are clearly presented in the SAR and show generally good trends.

Strengths:

1. The content of the study program is close to industry and relevant for the transition to workforce (in the industry);
2. Involvement in actualizing and renewal of the professional standard;
3. Opportunities of mobility for the students.

Weaknesses:

1. Feedback from graduates (and student bodies) should be incorporated more into the evaluation of study programme and each individual study course;
2. Decreasing number of student mobility;
3. A module for the development of business professional competencies could be geared more relevance to social work or general topicality of study field.

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

#### **Analysis**

In general, resources and provisions, available for study program "Social Rehabilitation", are described in LU PSMC applied SAR and information obtained during the expert on-site visit, including the tour of material technical base. The analysis of the general available resources attached in the section on the provision of the study field and evaluated as appropriate for the study program. The provision of the study program was assessed in all places of implementation of the study program - Riga and Rezekne.

Informative provisions of the study program "Social Rehabilitation" are at a satisfactory level and serve well for the specific features of the study program. Although the college has an EBSCO research database available for students, a suggestion would be to set a plan in the future to make other scientific/research databases available to students. Especially when the Open Science movement is rapidly evolving in Europe. Technical and informative provisions are at a satisfactory level, however, the college should plan ahead and make more resources available for the future

(such as research databases, including Open Access ones). The digital tools and technical issues, mentioned in study field assessment part, eligible for study program "Social rehabilitation".

Valuable asset for students is availability of internships - it gives an essential insight into the profession and therefore it is crucial for the study process, therefore it is of great value for students to gain access to the social institutions during their practical part of studies. These study programme requires specific equipment and facilities, therefore it is satisfactory that the LU PSMC not only has all the computer hardware in place but also specific equipment that is used in institutions for providing social care.

Library materials are adequate and fulfills needs of study process of the study program. It is worth noting that overall digital tools and systems usage could be a better level by exploring free or low-budget options without focusing on expensive options that are considered right now.

Also general accessibility of information could be improved - for example - currently course descriptions of study program are not readily available to students. The college has adequate infrastructure resources in use and the material and technical provisions that ensure the implementation of the study field are available for the implementation of the study programme.

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

The college has adequate infrastructure resources in use and the material and technical provisions, that ensure the implementation of the study field, are available and appropriate for the implementation of the study programme "Social Rehabilitation".

Digital tool and information management system usage and budget options should be considered on the study field level. Course descriptions and other relevant study information is not easily and readily available to students online.

Technical and informative provisions are at a satisfactory level, however, the college should plan ahead and make more resources available for the future (such as research databases, including Open Access ones).

An emphasis on the internships in social institutions leads to consolidated theoretical knowledge by professional practice.

Strengths:

1. Good infrastructure and material provision required for a successful study process.
2. Strong emphasis on internship availability highlights practicality of studies.

Weaknesses:

1. The informative provisions could be improved by adding more research databases or Open Science libraries to the students.
2. Study program information - like course descriptions - are not readily available to students.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

Qualification of the teaching staff involved in implementation of the "Social Rehabilitation" study programme study courses complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments and the strategic goals set by the LU PSMC. 22 lecturers are involved in implementation of the study programme, 14 of which are academic staff, 8 invited lecturers. 1 lecturer with a doctor's degree in management sciences, education management, 1 lecturer with a doctor's degree in pedagogy, 17

lecturers with a master's degree and 2 lecturers with a bachelor's degree and 1 with a secondary professional education participate in the implementation of the study program.

In realization of the study program "Social Rehabilitation" basic courses 44 CP (66 ECTS) or 79% are implemented by the academic staff of the college and 21 CP (31.5 ECTS) or 30 % by invited lecturers, excluding free choice study courses, qualification work management. (ANNEX 5. Basic information about the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study field.pdf/6\_ANNEX\_Lecturer\_Biographies\_(CV).pdf)

The didactic training and research skills of the teachers involved in the "Social Rehabilitation" study program satisfy the requirements necessary for the teaching and training activities of the students. The number of teachers remained almost unchanged for the reported period and stability is an important factor for the teaching process and also for planning and developing the study program.

Specialists working in the industry, as stated, are also involved in the educational process, thus increasing the quality of the educational process. An example: "General rehabilitation" study course is given by a specialist from a rehabilitation center who works directly with people in the process of resocialization and social reintegration.

As possible risk for the program could be related to attracting of young teachers, being a small number of specialists in the field, and the remuneration would not be competitive.

However, examples of good practice show that there are people who understand the industry and want to share their experience which could be beneficial for solving this situation.

The program corresponds to the level of academic staff, required for 1st level vocational higher education. The documents regarding the studies and the training of the teaching staff, the involvement in research projects, the participation in specialized conferences, national and international, prove the quality and lead to the achievement of the learning results. (Annex 5: Basic information about the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study field; Annex 6: Lecturer biographies ; Annex 8: List of publications, patents, artistic creativity projects of teaching staff during the reporting period).

During the online meetings with students, graduates and employers, they appreciated the training of all teachers involved in the teaching process (full lecturers, guest lecturers and specialists).

It can be mentioned that the group of experts could also see examples where each lecturer contributes - one specialises in new and interactive input, another enriches his / her professional experience, yet another - their personal, because he / she has experienced growth from receiving the service providing it.

The research projects (national and international) in which the teachers were involved are related to the specifics of the "Social Rehabilitation" study program. The results of scientific research can be found in specialized articles and published books, materials to which students have access, but also in the information taught in courses and seminars.

Teaching staff is participated in development courses; e.g: Development of Digital Skills of Academic Staff; Scientific Publishing Skills of Academic Staff; English for Academic and Administrative Staff. The cooperation of the teaching staff, management and the support of the department were also felt during the visit, where it could be observed that the lecturers form the overall puzzle of the programme to provide students with good opportunities to increase their competence in the profession.



Teaching staff has confirmed that it is a mechanism for mutual collaboration between existing teaching staff on the basis of regular meetings. During the interviews, the mechanism of mutual collaboration between the teachers was approached, but also between the program director and the teachers, and a good collaboration was observed.

The teaching staff in the Rezekne branch is mostly the same as in Riga, the work is organized according to the developed scheme and schedule, that the teaching staff travels to Rezekne and stays in the college hotel.

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

In general, the changes in the composition of the teaching staff of the college and the evaluated study program "Social Rehabilitation" are not big, the college takes measures so that the changes in the composition of the teaching staff do not negatively affect the quality of the study programme implementation and compliance with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments.

The qualification of the LU PSMC teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study program "Social Rehabilitation" complies with the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments.

The fact that there is a stable composition of the academic staff, lecturers studying for a doctorate, as well as practitioners is to be positively assessed.

The academic staff is involved in scientific research.

Strengths:

1. Stability of teaching staff composition.
2. Involvement of teaching staff in the research projects; students' access to the results of research projects in the courses and in various publications (articles, books).
2. Cooperation with employers' organisations is possible not only to promote the growth of students' practical skills, but also to help organisations to innovate, to promote the acquisition of new resources for more efficient provision of services.

Weaknesses:

1. A possible risk for the teaching staff of the study program related to attracting of young teachers, being a small number of specialists in the field and not be competitive remuneration.

## **5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Social Rehabilitation"**

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The provided sample of the Diploma complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to MK No. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Cooperation agreement in place with University of Daugavpils. See annex. 29P - Cooperation agreement Nr.5.8/8

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Study places are only available as state funded ones. In Annex 30P provided template for addendum to study agreement for compensation to students if college loses its accreditation. General clause for compensation is included in study agreement.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Attached resumes of teaching staff and confirmation in annex 31P verifies that state language proficiency is compliant with MK. Nr. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Missing information regarding the obligation of the college to inform the student about any changes regarding the licensing or accreditation.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

For some courses the additional information sources just state (among others) "Legal acts". A good example on how to include legal acts into study course literature, see study course "Civīlā aizsardzība" (Civil Protection).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification, which were not approved at all at the time of submission. It is commendable that the college has invested in the renewal of the professional standard and ensures the compliance of the study program with the professional standard.

In Annex 23: Compliance of professional qualification attained in Social Rehabilitation study programme with professional standard - mapping against the draft standard was performed, in which the compliance of the program with the standard was analyzed (the analysis summary should be developed by the college). It is stated that - The Professional Standard has been submitted for approval to the National Tripartite Cooperation Council for Vocational Education and Training

the Tripartite Employment Sub-Council. Additionally added 28.10.2021. letter received - confirmation from the council on the standard approval process. The website of the State Education Content Center shows that the new standard has been approved on 15.12.2021.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the State Education Standard (Cabinet Regulation No. 141 Regulations on the State Standard for First-Level Professional Higher Education).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Academic staff has publications published in reviewed editions. However, they are mainly either in national level editions or thesis from conferences. The academic staff, if not involved in active publishing, has practical (relevant for the study course) work experience.

15 R5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

All the provisions necessary for a successful implementation of the study programme are compliant.

**Requirements (R6-R8)**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Good infrastructure and material provision required for a successful study process.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The qualification of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study program corresponds to the level of the study program and ensures high-quality implementation of the program

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

**Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The LU PSMC has adequate infrastructure resources in use and the material and technical provisions, that ensure the implementation of the study field, are available and appropriate for the implementation of the study programme "Social Rehabilitation".

Study program "Social Rehabilitation" name, code, admission rules, goals and planned results have been developed and defined in compliance with the State Education Standard for 1st level higher education, with principles of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Provided set of knowledge, skills and attitudes allows to carry out a qualified social services process in accordance with the professional standard and provides an opportunity for further studies in bachelor's and second level professional higher education Social Work study programmes in Latvia and other European countries.

The content and implementation methods of study program "Social Rehabilitation" are carried out according to the level of education, in accordance with the national legislation. The relevance of the

content of the study program is supported by the industry during traineeship, after the traineeship period giving the feedback about the competencies of the students. Student-centred learning and principles are taken into account. Students take advantage of mobility opportunities (incoming and outgoing).

The teaching staff composition is stabile, qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. Specialists working in the industry also involved in the educational process, increasing the quality of the educational process.

All assessment of study program "Social Rehabilitation" is applicable for LU PSMC both implementation places - in Jurmala city and Rezekne city. The experts definitely see great value in fact, that the LU PSMC regional branch in Rezekne city fulfills important regional social functions including indirect lifelong learning possibilities for the local community.

#### Strengths:

1. Compliance with the requirements of the regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia and stability, invariability and topicality of the programme.
2. Excellent, student-friendly, advanced infrastructure.
3. Good contribution of college management in preparation of the documents, knowledge of the field and excellent work with a wide range of employers. The sphere of social welfare and social services has certainly developed thanks to the contribution of the college.
4. Loyal and well motivated students and staff. Personal interest in students, the provision of support, thorough work and care from lecturers, excellent contact with students and graduates.
5. Strong emphasis on internship availability highlights practicality of studies. Graduates perfectly reflected the work environment and the need for a professional workforce.
6. The latest literature sources and methodological materials available in Latvia have been used.
7. Great opportunities to use LU continuing education offer for lecturers.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Decreasing number of student mobility.
2. Study information - like course descriptions - are not readily available to students.
3. A possible risk for the program related to attracting of young teachers, being a small number of specialists in the field and not be competitive the remuneration in the industry.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Social Rehabilitation"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Social Rehabilitation"**

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

To specify the study programme learning outcomes in compliance with of AIKA requirements (see the Experts Joint Report for more specific instructions, criterion 1).

Submit the results of the survey indicating the number of respondents actually involved in the survey (see Experts Joint Report, the analysis of criterion 2).

Provide a description of the entrepreneurship course, including topics relevant to the industry, such as social entrepreneurship (See Experts Joint Report, the Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof, part: weaknesses).

Make an analytical summary of the standard mapping of how well each course meets the standard requirements and draw conclusions about the adequacy of the volume of the most indicated courses in the program to meet the standard requirements.

## Long-term recommendations

To follow and stay up to date with the recent research and current theories and where possible, to update the mandatory literature list of study programme study courses, making sure to include up-to-date and recent scientific research-based literature.

The place of students' internships should be different from the place they already work professionally so they diversify their experiences. It is recommended to create in practice such conditions when students or internships in several institutions, which will expand their professional field of vision.

Follow the internship process more, for example, organising a visit to the institution at the end of the internship, organising seminars together with the representatives of the internship places. Students with new ideas can help to plan this type of interexchange of ideas.

Although in general the negotiations with students and graduates gave the impression of good cooperation, it can always be developed. It is recommended to organise regular meetings with students and graduates, including employers, to discuss current topics related to study quality, possible joint projects, for example, to record some discussions or create video - study materials and other creative ideas that would certainly be generated by the young professionals themselves better than by external experts or the academic staff of the college. In order not to overload the academic staff, it is possible that such meetings could be entrusted to the Student Council with the support of lecturers, changing the responsible moderators.

Evaluate the possibility of introducing students to the SOPA system in the IT study course.

## II. "Social Care" ASSESSMENT

### II. "Social Care" ASSESSMENT

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

The 1st level professional higher education study programme "Social Care" has been established in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.141 of March 20, 2001, "Regulations on the State First Level Professional Higher Education Standard", with the Classification of Professions of the Republic of Latvia and internal regulatory enactments of LU PSMC.

The program meets the requirements in terms of coherence between name, degree, qualifications, aims, objectives and admission requirements and is clearly situated at level 4 of the qualification framework.

Study program "Social Care" (classification code 41764) is organized in form of full time studies, with duration of 2 years (4 semesters), volume of 80 credits (CP), 120 ECTS, in Latvian. Study program implementation places are - is in Jurmala city, Vidus prospect 38, and in LU PSMC branch in Rezekne city.

As admission requirement is defined the secondary education, that focused on student candidates with previous general secondary education or the secondary vocational (professional) education.

At the end of the study program and successful final test and the defence of the qualification paper is provided the diploma for the first level professional higher education, which also confirms the acquired fourth level of professional qualification, and Social care worker obtained qualification.

The overview of tasks of the study program "Social Care" and professional knowledge, skills and competences as results of study program shows, that the study program management understand very well the main goals, duties and specific of social care worker professional level with further orientation on social care specialist working field. For example, the aim of study program, formulated in SAR: "To prepare qualified, competitive social work specialists who provide quality social care services in accordance with their professional competencies, understand and observe the basic principles and values of social services, determine and organize the necessary resources, according to client groups and individual needs" giving the understanding about planned goals of "basic principles" of the profession in accordance to the study level.

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

The name of the LU PSMC study programme "Social Care", the diploma to be issued, the professional qualification to be acquired, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated, defined very well with further orientation to the social care specialist profession.

Strengths:

1. Compliance with the requirements of the regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia.
2. Stability, invariability and topicality of the programme.

Weaknesses:

Not identified

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

### **Analysis**

The study program "Social Care" is carried out according to the level of education, in accordance with the national legislation: first-level vocational higher education and is carried out normally, in 2 years (4 semesters), with 80 credit (CP), 120 ECTS credit (see ANNEX 16 Compliance of Social Care study program to national education standard). These standards are met in the education of students in Jurmala and Rezekne.

Study Regulations of the LU PSMC determine the basic information about the study content and the organization of the study process. The procedure for examinations of study courses determines the types, form and course of examinations, as well as the rights and obligations of students and lecturers in the process of evaluating the results of the study course. The Regulations on State Final Examinations prescribe the procedure by which the state final examination for the acquisition of first-level professional higher education programs for award of a qualification and the issuance of a

diploma is organized.

The compliance of the study programme "Social Care" with national education standards, that determine certain requirements related to the parts of the study programmes and their scope (compulsory, limited optional, optional), also the volume of the final work, was approved by experts as follow: total volume of study courses 56 CP (general study courses 20 CP, field study courses 36 CP), which is 70% of the total volume of the programme; volume of internship - 16 CP, qualification paper 8 CP. LU PSMC provided information about study program "Social Care" in SAR, Annex 16 (CONTENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STUDIES) and in Annex 19 (Study plan of study program Social Care, approved by LU PSMC in 15th December, 2020).

The content of the study program "Social Care" corresponds to the professional standard of the profession "Social care worker", code of the profession – 341201, provided from LU PSMC and added in a part "Other annexes / AIC coordinator added annexes". In Annex 17 "Compliance of professional qualification attained in Social care study programme with professional standard" is provided compliance with project of actualized professional standard aimed at harmonization the professional standard is in the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council of the National Tripartite Cooperation Council of Vocational education and employment (PINTSA).

The LU PSMC study program "Social Care" content is included in compulsory part a module for the development of business professional competencies Entrepreneurship professional competence module (6 CP): Basics of business and project management - 2 CP, Legal bases and legal aspects of professional activity - 2 CP, Introduction to specialty and social dialogue - 2 CP (Annex 25). But, module "Entrepreneurship professional competence" could be geared more towards program as a whole. Meaning there are indications that there would be great appreciation of less of a dry business theory and more relevance to social work or general topicality of study field.

The LU PSMC study program "Social Care" study plan contents study course Civil protection - 1 CP and study course Hygiene and environmental protection - 2 CP to fully comply with requirements (Annex 19), as regulated the special requirements to the studies related to the environmental protection course and civil protection course in Environmental Protection Law and Civil Protection and Disaster Management Law of the Republic of Latvia.

The college provides adequate implementation and evaluation methods to achieve the goals of the study program "Social Care". The college adapted very well to the covid situation by also offering blended education, while stressing the importance of face to face education for modules aimed at developing skills.

The internship in study program "Social Care" is provided in 16 CP scope: Internship – 6 CP and Qualification practice – 10 CP. Some students state that there should be an opportunity for more internship moments. Yet the good and close relation with the institutions on the labour market offer excellent learning conditions, and people from practice are involved as teaching staff.

Graduates should be included more thoroughly in the process of improving the study process. Graduates are also a great source for bridging the professional institutions with the study programmes, e.g. as a place for students' internship.

The main impression from the employers is that the study programme is crucial for ensuring that there are no shortages in the workforce in this field. Some feedback from employers is received via internship processes after it is done by the students. Here there is a place for improvement in asking



the employers what were the missing skills and knowledge that should be gained from the programmes.

The results of student, employer and graduate surveys, which show generally good trends, are clearly presented in the SAR. However, the number of respondents involved in the surveys remained unclear, as only percentages that are not relevant practices in research and compilation of such surveys are used, as the survey may have been completed by 10 respondents, which is 100% - but these would not be reliable results for drawing conclusions. The college points out in the report that all the lecturers of the college are introduced to the overall results of the survey during the annual interviews and that improvements are made after the results of the survey, and solutions for improving the quality of the study process are sought. The results of the surveys are analysed by the Study Programme Council of the Department of Social Care. There is no assurance that respondents are given feedback on their guidance and suggestions.

The study program offers students mobility in different universities in the country and in Europe (See ANNEX 11 Statistics on student mobility). In the analyzed period 2013-2021, 16 students from the Social Care Study Program left in the mobility program; for example, in the period 2016-2017, students went to: Pflegezentrum Grote GmbH, Germany • AWO Bildungszentrum Tretenhof, Germany • Trakya University Stara Zagora Medical College, Bulgaria • Tartu Health Care College, Estonia, and in 2019-2020: Utenos University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania.

Students take advantage of mobility opportunities (incoming and outgoing) and develop their knowledge, skills and abilities to work with people in need.

The study program is equally implemented in Jurmala and Rezekne. The implementation of the study program in the branch in Rezekne is organized according to the same principles that Riga and the quality of studies are the same.

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

The study program is equally implemented in Jurmala and Rezekne. The study program "Social Care" is carried out according to the level of education, in accordance with the national legislation. The study program has the quality indicators satisfied: qualified teachers, good technical and material background, internships offered in cooperation with social service providers. The relevance of the content of the study program is backed by the industry where students have their traineeships, after the traineeship period giving their feedback about the competencies of the students. The results of student, employer and graduate surveys, which show generally good trends, are clearly presented in the Self-assessment report.

#### **Strengths:**

1. The program is carried out according to the level of education, in accordance with the national legislation.
2. The study program offers students mobility in different universities in the country and in Europe, which allows them to accumulate new knowledge and experiences.
3. The skills and knowledge gained in the study programme reflects quite well the current needs of the industry; internships provide a possibility to gain practical skills of the industry.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. Lacking a system of how to implement and gain information from graduates and employers.
2. A module for the development of business professional competencies could be geared more

relevance to social work or general topicality of study field.

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

#### **Analysis**

As analyzed on the study field level, the study program "Social Care" resources and informative provisions, on the experts point of view, are at a satisfactory level. The provision of the study program was assessed in all places of implementation of the study program - Riga and Rezekne.

The fact that LU PSK is a medical college is of great advantage for students (especially) of the Social Care programme because of the specific technical equipment available for the study process. These study programmes require specific equipment and facilities, therefore it is satisfactory that this college not only has all the computer hardware in place but also specific equipment that is used in institutions for providing social care.

Library materials are adequate and fulfills needs of study process of the study programme "Social Care". Although the college has an EBSCO research database available for students, a suggestion would be to set a plan in the future to make other scientific/research databases available to students. Especially when the Open Science movement is rapidly evolving in Europe. Few presented papers on the student conference on the subject of Social Care indicate a successful integration of research in the study process which is a basis for successful high-quality study process.

It is worth noting that overall digital tools and systems usage could be a better level by exploring free or low-budget options without focusing on expensive options that are considered right now. Also general accessibility of information could be at a better level - for example - currently course descriptions of study programmes are not readily available to students.

In general, LU PSMC college has adequate infrastructure resources in use and the material and technical provisions that ensure the implementation of the study direction are available for the implementation of the all study programs in the field, including study program "Social Care". Source: Self-assessment report and information obtained during the expert on-site visit, including the tour of material technical base.

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

Informative and material provisions required for implementation of the study programme for evaluated study program "Social Care" are at a good level. Digital tool and information management system usage is at quite low level and budget options should be considered. Course descriptions and other relevant study information is not easily and readily available to students online.

Strengths:

1. Good infrastructure and material provision required for successful study process.
2. Specific technical equipment and facilities available for using during the study process.

Weaknesses:

1. Study information - like course descriptions - are not readily available to students.

### **4. Teaching Staff**

#### **Analysis**

Qualification of the teaching staff involved in implementation of the Social Care study programme study courses complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments and the strategic goals set by the college. 21 lecturers are involved in implementation of the study programme, 14 of which are academic staff, 7 invited lecturers. 1 lecturer with a doctor's degree in pedagogy, 17 lecturers with a master's degree and 2 lecturers with a bachelor's degree and 1 with a secondary professional education participate in the implementation of the study program.

In realization of the Social Care study programme basic courses 45 CP (67.5 ECTS) or 80% are implemented by the academic staff of the college and 11 CP (16.5 ECTS) or 20% by invited lecturers (excluding free choice study courses, qualification work management) ( ANNEX 5. Basic information about the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study field.pdf/ 6\_ANNEX\_Lecturer\_Biographies\_(CV).pdf)

The didactic training and research skills of the teachers involved in the „Social Care” study programme satisfy the requirements necessary for the teaching and training activities of the students. The number of teachers involved in the educational process satisfies the needs of the study program; stability is an important factor for the teaching process but also for planning and developing the program.

Specialists working in the field were also involved in the educational process, thus increasing the quality of the educational process. Good cooperation with employers' organisations is appreciated, that makes possible not only to promote the growth of students' practical skills, but also to help organisations to innovate, to promote the acquisition of new resources for more efficient provision of services.

A risk for the program "Social Care" is similar to the study program "Social Rehabilitation" and related to attracting young teachers, because of a limited number of specialists in the field and the low competitiveness of the remuneration in industry. However, examples of good practice show that in the development and implementation of the study program "Social Care" are involved personal understand the industry main needs and ready to share their experience, what could be assessed as beneficial for solving this situation.

The study program "Social Care" teaching staff training compliance, as proved, corresponds to the 1st level vocational higher education. The documents regarding the studies and the training of the teaching staff, the involvement in research projects, the participation in specialized conferences, national and international, prove the quality and lead to the achievement of the learning results. (Annex 5: Basic information about the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study field; Annex 6: Lecturer biographies ; Annex 8: List of publications, patents, artistic creativity projects of teaching staff during the reporting period).

During the assessment visit and meetings with students, graduates and employers, they appreciated the training of all teachers involved in the teaching process (full-time lecturers, guest lecturers and specialists).

It can be mentioned that the group of experts could also see examples where each lecturer contributes - one specialises in new and interactive input, another enriches his / her professional experience, yet another - their personal, because he / she has experienced growth from receiving the service providing it.

Teaching staff of LU PSMC study program "Social Care", as provided, participated in research projects and development courses for staff, for example: Development of Digital Skills of Academic Staff; Scientific Publishing Skills of Academic Staff; English for Academic and Administrative Staff.

The results of scientific research of teaching staff can be found in specialized articles and published books, materials to which students have access, but also incorporated in the information taught in study courses and seminars.

The cooperation of the teaching staff, management and the support personal of the departments, as felt during the visit, provide students with good opportunities to increase their competence in the profession. During the interviews, the mechanism of mutual collaboration between the teaching staff was approached, but also between the program director and the teachers, and a good collaboration was observed.

Teaching staff has confirmed, that the mechanism for mutual collaboration between existing teaching staff organized on the basis of regular meetings.

The teaching staff in the Rezekne branch is mostly the same as in Riga, the work is organized according to the developed scheme and schedule, that the teaching staff travels to Rezekne and stays in the college hotel.

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

In general, the changes in the composition of the teaching staff of the LU PSMC study program "Social Care" are not big, the college takes measures so that the changes in the composition of the teaching staff do not negatively affect the quality of the study programme implementation and compliance with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments.

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments.

The fact of a stabile composition of the academic staff, lecturers, continuing studies in doctor level, as well as practitioners from industry, is positively assessed. The academic staff is involved in scientific research.

Strengths:

1. Stability of teaching staff composition.
2. Involvement in research projects, students' access to the results of research projects in the courses and in various publications (articles, books).
2. Good cooperation with employers' organisations for internship and educational purposes.

Weaknesses:

1. A possible risk for the program related to attracting of young teachers, because of a limited number of specialists in the field and the low competitiveness of the remuneration in industry.

## **5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Social Care"**

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The provided sample of the Diploma complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to MK No. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus"

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Cooperation with foreign universities is the future vision and plan of the college, it is well established through ERASMUS activities, but it needs to be developed.

Cooperation agreement in place with University of Daugavpils. See annex 29P - Cooperation agreement Nr.5.8/8

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Study places are only available as state funded ones. In annex 30P provided template for addendum to study agreement for compensation to students if college loses its accreditation. General clause for compensation is included in study agreement.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Attached resumes of teaching staff and confirmation in annex 31P verifies that state language proficiency is compliant with MK. Nr. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Agreement complies with the Regulation Nr.70 of the Cabinet of Ministers. However info regarding 5.4. point might be missing: "5.4. informēt studējošo par izmaiņām augstskolas, koledžas vai studiju programmas akreditācijas vai licencēšanas datos;"

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Course descriptions and study materials are in Latvian. Course descriptions reflect the goals of the course, study results, content of the course etc. These descriptions comply with requirements Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification, which were not approved at all at the time of submission. It is commendable that the college has invested in the renewal of the professional standard and ensures the compliance of the study program with the professional standard.

In Annex 23: Compliance of professional qualification attained in Social Care study programme with professional standard - mapping against the draft standard was performed, in which the compliance of the program with the standard was analyzed (the analysis summary should be developed by the college). It is stated that - The Professional Standard has been submitted for approval to the National Tripartite Cooperation Council for Vocational Education and Training the Tripartite Employment Sub-Council. Additionally added 28.10.2021. letter received - confirmation from the council on the standard approval process. The website of the State Education Content Center shows that the new standard has been approved on 15.12.2021.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the State Education Standard (Cabinet Regulation No. 141 Regulations on the State Standard for First-Level Professional Higher Education).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Academic staff has publications published in reviewed editions. However, they are mainly either in national level editions or thesis from conferences. The academic staff, if not involved in active publishing, has practical (relevant for the study course) work experience.

- 15 R5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

All the provisions necessary for a successful implementation of the study programme are compliant.

**Requirements (R6-R8)**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

All the provisions of the study programme, including scientific and informative and material, are compliant.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The qualification of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study program corresponds to the level of the study program and ensures high-quality implementation of the program

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

**Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The LU PSMC has adequate infrastructure resources in use and the material and technical provisions, that ensure the implementation of the study field, are available and appropriate for the implementation of the study programme "Social Care".

Study program "Social Care" name, code, admission rules, goals and planned results have been developed and defined in compliance with the State Education Standard for 1st level higher education, with principles of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Provided set of knowledge, skills and attitudes allows to carry out a qualified social services process in accordance with the professional standard and provides an opportunity for further studies in bachelor's and second level professional higher education Social Work study programmes in Latvia and other European countries.

The overview of tasks of the study program "Social Care" and professional knowledge, skills and competences as results of study program shows, that the study program management understand very well the main goals, duties and specific of social care worker professional level with further orientation on social care specialist working field.

The content and implementation methods of study program "Social Care" are carried out according to the level of education, in accordance with the national legislation. The relevance of the content of the study program is supported by the industry during traineeship, after the traineeship period giving the feedback about the competencies of the students. Student-centred learning and principles are taken into account. Students take advantage of mobility opportunities (incoming and outgoing).

The teaching staff composition is stabile, qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. Specialists working in the industry also involved in the educational process, increasing the quality of the educational process.

All assessment of study program "Social Care" is applicable for LU PSMC both implementation places - in Jurmala city and Rezekne city. The experts definitely see great value in fact, that the LU PSMC regional branch in Rezekne city fulfills important regional social functions including indirect lifelong learning possibilities for the local community.

#### Strengths:

1. Compliance with the requirements of the regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia and stability, invariability and topicality of the programme.
2. Excellent, student-friendly, advanced infrastructure.
3. Good contribution of management, direction managers, programme managers in preparation of the documents, knowledge of the field specific and excellent work with employers of the sphere of social welfare and social services.
4. Loyal and well motivated students and staff. Personal interest in students, the provision of support, thorough work and care from lecturers, excellent contact with students and graduates.
5. Graduates perfectly reflected the work environment and the need for a professional workforce. Strong emphasis on internship availability highlights practicality of studies and good cooperation with employers' organisations.
6. The latest literature sources and methodological materials available in Latvia have been used.
7. Great opportunities to use LU continuing education offer for lecturers.
8. A regional branch in Rezekne city fulfills important regional social functions including indirect lifelong learning possibilities for the local community. The experts definitely see great value in this fact.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Decreasing number of student mobility.



2. Study information - like course descriptions - are not readily available to students.
3. A possible risk for the program related to attracting of young teachers, because of a limited number of specialists in the field and the low competitiveness of the remuneration in industry.

## Evaluation of the study programme "Social Care"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## 6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Social Care"

### Short-term recommendations

To specify the study programme learning outcomes in compliance with of AIKA requirements (see the Experts Joint Report for more specific instructions, criterion 1).

Submit the results of the survey indicating the number of respondents actually involved in the survey (see Experts Joint Report, the analysis of criterion 2).

Provide a description of the entrepreneurship course, including topics relevant to the industry, such as social entrepreneurship (See Experts Joint Report, the Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof, part: weaknesses).

Make an analytical summary of the standard mapping of how well each course meets the standard requirements and draw conclusions about the adequacy of the volume of the most indicated courses in the program to meet the standard requirements.

### Long-term recommendations

To follow and stay up to date with the recent research and current theories in the field, to update regularly the mandatory literature list of study programme study courses, making sure to include up-to-date and recent scientific research-based literature.

Trying to differ the places of students' internships from the place they already work professionally so that they diversify their experiences. It is recommended to evaluate to integrate in practice conditions when students undergo during internships several institutions, which will expand their professional field of vision.

Follow the internship process more, for example, organising a visit to the institution at the end of the internship, organising seminars together with the representatives of the internship places. Students with new ideas can help to plan this type of interexchange of ideas.

Although in general the negotiations with students and graduates gave the impression of good cooperation, it can always be developed. It is recommended to organise regular meetings with students and graduates, including employers, to discuss current topics related to study quality, possible joint projects, for example, to record some discussions or create video - study materials and other creative ideas that would certainly be generated by the young professionals themselves better than by external experts or the academic staff of the college. In order not to overload the academic staff, it is possible that such meetings could be entrusted to the Student Council with the support of lecturers, changing the responsible moderators.

Evaluate the possibility of introducing students to the SOPA system in the IT study course.

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

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

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

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:	Fully compliant		The criterion is assessed as fulfilled, as the requirements of Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education of the Law on Higher Education Institutions are implemented.
R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.	Fully compliant		The College has developed and extensive cooperation with institutions in Latvia to provide internships, which is also the main goal in the implementation of the field of study, so the evaluation is appropriate. Cooperation with foreign universities is well established through ERASMUS activities and needs to continue to develop.
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).	Fully compliant		LU PSMC has developed the mechanisms for the involvement of teaching staff in applied scientific research, practical, specific to the level of educational training.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.	Fully compliant			The LU PSMC has taken measures to eliminate the shortcomings identified during the previous evaluation of the study field. During previous evaluation the recommendations focuses mainly towards the need of strengthening research and scientific capacity. College has implemented activities to fulfill those recommendations. The experts' team sees more importance to continue to work in the direction of implementing of recommendations considering internships abroad and cooperation with other HEIs in Latvia - with focus towards harmonization of study programs so that graduates can successfully continue studies in other institutions afterwards.

#### 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	Social Rehabilitation (41762)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
2	Social Care (41764)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good

#### The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts