

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Turība University

Study field: Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation

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

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Experts assessed Turība University (TU) study field “Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation” and its four relevant study programmes. The study field aims are clearly defined and attainable. Tourism studies at TU are being developed and managed strategically. The quality assurance system at TU is present, the processes are listed, and the procedures are publicly available. However, the experts perceived possible improvements in some areas in the implementation. TU resources and provision of the study field can be rated as sufficient. Library equipment and available digital resources (e-books, databases, and software) make it possible to conclude that learning resources and their availability are good. The academic, research and workload of the teaching staff is balanced. Students receive support from various sources. The research areas are adequately defined and correspond to the institutional goals while connected with teaching activities. Students’ involvement in research is promoted. The research outcomes fit in the number, while there is a need to increase the number of publications in journals indexed in Scopus and WoS and papers published by international publishers.

Innovative teaching methods are visible, while teaching staff tend to improve their knowledge through seminars and training programmes. The cooperation with other institutions in Latvia is well-established and closely linked to the study programmes. Collaboration in the form of internships works very well with the industry. Students and teaching staff's outgoing mobility is modest. The number of incoming students and teaching staff needs to be much higher. Students are mainly benefiting from Erasmus+ possibilities. TU acknowledges the need to develop mobility, but a clearly defined strategy has yet to be established to achieve the goal. Recommendations from the previous study field assessment procedure were mostly fulfilled. TU has shown a very good example of how changes are possible by implementing them. Still, some recommendations have only partially been implemented, mostly related to encouraging students to go on exchange programmes, developing collaborations with other foreign HEI, updating aspects of digitisation and complimenting them with action research as this field of study develops.

The first level professional higher education study programme, “Hotel Services Organizer”, is a well-developed study programme with good content and a professional standard, with tempting arguments for choosing to study it. However, there is a big gap between its practical implementation and the fact that it is not actually implemented to the extent of the required student workload. The knowledge, skills and developed professional competencies acquired during such organised studies do not meet the objectives of the field of study and the study programme. The study programme equips students with elementary professional skills for the hospitality industry. Examples of thesis topics also show strong relevance to the field of study and the study programme’s focus. Resources and provision of the study programme can be rated as sufficient. Although there is a high demand for labour in the hotel sector, interest in applying for the study programme is relatively low. All teaching staff have qualifications according to the requirements and regulatory acts. The composition of the teaching staff engaged in the study programme implementation is stable. Industry professionals represent 30% of the academic staff to ensure a practical point of view and the competitiveness of students and graduates in the labour market, as well as higher income and prestige of the profession.

The professional bachelor's study programme, “Event Production and Management,” is a needed study programme offered in Latvia. The professional standard requires excellent financial literacy and a comprehensive knowledge of commercial management, balanced with an emphasis on creativity drawn from the study programme. Changes to the study programme were made in 2018, primarily based on adapting to the market situation and the marketing aspects of attracting students. These changes significantly increased student recruitment compared to the pre-2018

period. Industry representatives and other stakeholders confirmed the need for such a study programme and emphasised the significant expansion of events tourism in Europe. The content complies with the national education standard and the respective professional standard. Study methods are diverse across the curriculum due to different courses, enabling student-centred teaching and allowing the achievement of study programme goals. Students get enough information and possibilities to realise the planned internships. Most of theses' topics are relevant and correspond to the study programme. Lecture halls, rooms, computer labs and specially equipped learning spaces provide conducting practical activities as part of the study process. Teaching staff qualifications comply with the state requirements and with the subjects taught in the study programme.

The professional bachelor study programme "Tourism and Hospitality Management" fully meets the thematic direction of studies and is forming TU's identity as a tourism stakeholder. The title, code, degree to be obtained, professional qualification, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. There is a very high drop-out rate and a large gap between the number of students enrolled and those who successfully graduate. The goals of the study courses are closely aligned with the overall goals of the study programme. The study programme complies with the state education standard for bachelor's degree programmes and the occupational standard for Tourism services manager. Study implementation methods which contribute to achieving the courses and programmes goals and student-centred learning and teaching in this study programme are present. The internship complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. Incoming students are assisted in the same way as Latvian students. Topics elaborated in the final theses confirm that they correspond to the study programme. The resources to support the study process are ample and diverse. The qualifications of the teaching staff correspond with the state requirements and are suitable for the subjects taught in the study programme. The staff composition is stable and ideal for fulfilling the study programme's objectives. Teaching staff members cooperate mutually to improve the study programme. It is confirmed that learning is student-centred and problem-based.

The professional master study programme "Tourism Strategic Management" gives students a competitive advantage in labour market. The indicators analysed do not point to significant problems in implementing the study programme. Still, a number of opportunities for improving the quality of the study programme are listed below. Its strengths are also indicated. The content of the study programme is topical. The awarding of a degree is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant field of science. Student-centred teaching and learning are a reality within this study programme. The opportunities and provision of internships offered to students and work organisations are compelling, including for international students. The final theses topics are relevant to the field and contribute to the development of the tourism industry in general. The resources align with the conditions for implementing the study programme and are available and accessible to both full-time and part-time students. All teaching staff of the study programme have qualifications according to the regulatory acts. Industry professionals represent 45% of the teaching staff members to ensure a practical point of view, student-centred teaching and competitiveness of students and graduates in the labour market. The competencies of the teaching staff are competitive (education, research, memberships, positions). However, transferring relevant knowledge would be vital if professors were more involved in large and international research projects.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1. The aims of the study field, according to the self-assessment report (SAR, p. 18), are three. The first one: "Ensuring the development of students' general professional competencies in the fields of tourism, hospitality and event management in a modern, innovative academic process," is justified and achievable, but the emphasis on innovative, modern academic processes is difficult to measure. It does not include the quality of studies as an essential component of the objective. Quality of studies is also not included in the other two specific objectives of the field of study. It is also not explicitly included among the six objectives of TU as an organisation even though there is a systematic quality system for studies. The second aim is "Application of knowledge and skills acquired by students in scientific and practical research in different scales of tourism as an interdisciplinary field and its disciplines, emphasising the regional context". This is an important goal but is not well-measured and challenging to achieve. Its primary expression is through the themes of students' individual annual projects and final qualification theses. However, there is too little connection with integrating scientific and applied research into the study content. The positioning of the Faculty of International Tourism and the large number of international students do not justify the emphasis on the regional context. However, underutilising the Tourism Research Centre (<https://www.turiba.lv/lv/zinatne/turisma-petniecibas-centrs>) is a missed opportunity. The website claims that "The Faculty of International Tourism offers students the opportunity to develop their skills and work at the Tourism Research Centre of TU, which is the only centre of its kind in the Baltics. The Centre regularly brings together faculty and students to develop scientific and applied research in the field of tourism and hospitality and promote students' competence in the tourism market. Seminars, guest lectures, cooperation with government institutions, major industry companies and business sector research related to the tourism industry are all part of the everyday activities offered by the Tourism Research Centre." - this is an exaggeration (both for being the only centre of its kind and for its regularity of daily activities. The experts' discussions with lecturers and students did not confirm these claims. "Formation of international professional recognition in tourism, hospitality and event management education" is partly achieved through the UNWTO TedQual certificate. It is widely used in the marketing activities of the field of study but, to a much lesser extent, integrated into the study content of specific study courses. The study field and all four study programmes not only comply to a large extent with the main directions of the strategic development of the HEI (TU Development strategy 2021-2025) but also meet the needs and the development trends of the society, tourism industry (expert interviews with industry stakeholders) and national economy (e.g. https://www.em.gov.lv/sites/em/files/latvijas_turisma_nozares_analize_20brandtour_20final1.pdf and <https://www.liaa.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/veikts-petijums-par-latvijas-pievilcibu-ka-turisma-galamerki>). This alignment ensures the future relevance and success of the study programmes. The interlinkages between the study programmes included in the field of study are clear and logical. However, there is some overlap between the two bachelor study programmes (including in the courses of study and the themes of the bachelor theses developed). Some overlap is also inevitable in the successively offered second cycle professional higher education study programme "Tourism Strategic Management", given that students enter with different backgrounds in tourism.

1.1.2. TU has identified and analysed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the study field (SAR, pp. 19-21) - there are more strengths (12) and fewer weaknesses (5). Generally, it is well done. However, not all the strengths mentioned are equally applicable to all study programmes (e.g. "Developed, resilient, sustainable study programmes, based on the industry demand" is not entirely in line with the short cycle professional higher education study programme "Hotel Services Organiser" (41811) - based on student interview about various aspects of study programme delivery online, lack of contact hours, a small number of students graduating in

comparison with the intake. In this context, another of the strengths, "A student-centred approach to the study process", was not fully endorsed. Some distance learners feel forgotten because there is too little essential communication and no connection to the physical resources available at TU. SWOT analysis is made (Annex 3. Study direction development), and all parts are filled. (see also Annex 3. Development plan for the study field - even if there are many grammar errors and, for example, the SWOT analysis refers to the threat as "Friends"). However, SWOTs are not fully integrated into the TU study content development process. For example, the weakness mentioned was the "First-year dropout in the bachelor study programme, especially among foreign students." After requesting further information on the problem identified over the years, the management's written reply was: "The number of cases when reason has been provided is insufficient to draw general conclusions". Although various reasons have been given - including conjectures both in the written reply and during the visit in discussions with TU management, lecturers and students - there is little evidence of a deeper understanding of this systemic problem and real action to address it. The strength is that 40% of the TU International Tourism Faculty lecturers are employed in the sector. Weaknesses: some do not have a strong university identity, are not very involved in the overall development processes of TU, and make limited use of teaching or research training opportunities. Some of those working in the sector have limited capacity, which may affect the quality of studies.

1.1.3. The management structure of the study field and the corresponding study programmes are oriented towards its development. The attraction of international students has been influential. However, the hierarchical multi-level management structure is relatively complex and resource-intensive, which does not align with an efficient management model. For instance, there is a separate study programme director for a programme with "1" final year graduates or the dean, the director of the thematic area of study, and the study programme directors - their workload and division of responsibilities. Based on Annex 4 (The management structure of the study field), no one is responsible for supportive communication with tourism students or their career development. The decision-making process is strategically structured and does not hinder the development of the field of study as a whole. The administrative and technical staff strive to meet all the needs of the tourism study programmes. Therefore, there is a need to re-evaluate the management structure to ensure efficient resource allocation and effective communication with students.

1.1.4. Overall, a system and procedures are in place for the enrollment of students (SAR, p. 85 and TU enrollment regulations for the academic year 2024/2025), the recognition of study periods, professional experience, prior formal education, and the assessment of students' achievements and learning outcomes. At the same time, the criteria for the admission of students have not been effective, as indicated by the high drop-out rate during studies or multiple changes in the study field after enrolment in tourism studies. In the last two academic years, 85 international students have transferred from tourism study programmes to other study programmes in TU (based on TU management's written answers to additional questions from the experts). In the student interviews, some students needed clarification about the professional qualification they would receive at the end of their studies. At the same time, the demand for trained tourism professionals is very high (based on the interview with industry stakeholders), and focusing on a very narrow standard of a particular profession is only partially justified from a market perspective. Successful graduates are in demand and competitive in the tourism market. The practice of admitting students with no prior knowledge of tourism to Master's programmes is debatable. This leads to partial repetition of content for those who have studied tourism at the bachelor level. The admission criteria should be more focused on how the specific subject matter previously studied will create a competitive advantage in tourism.

At the start of the study course, academic staff inform students about the organisation, content,

requirements, learning outcomes, examinations and assessment criteria of the study course and emphasise the study course's relevance to the study programme's overall objectives. Courses of study are run relatively independently, especially those taught by professionals in the field. There needs to be a visible day-to-day overview of the extent to which specific competencies are being developed. For example, industry representatives mentioned during interviews that students' financial literacy has improved slightly in recent years. But is this enough? There is not really a holistic procedure to test this (e.g. a compulsory financial calculation section in a bachelor thesis).

1.1.5. There is a need for a more structured support system for industry professionals who lecture and are not sufficiently trained in innovative pedagogical approaches or are less experienced in different approaches to assessing learning outcomes. Based on the reference made by one of the students interviewed, the results achieved by this student in his previous tourism studies at another institution have not been transferred and recognised by TU. The study course descriptions include the main requirements for assessment and the assessment criteria. Most grades are obtained; more extensive feedback is occasional and dependent on the individual lecturer. Most of them provide general comments in the classroom on the work done but individual explanations at the request of students. Especially distance learners indicate the need for extended feedback. The relevance of assessment methods and procedures for achieving the aims of study programmes and the needs of students are included in several documents, including SAR (pp. 28-30). This procedure works well within each course of study and is managed by each lecturer. However, the common overview of acquired skills and knowledge is less targeted. Not only how the acquisition of the different skills required was planned, which can be traced by comparing the content of the occupational standards and the study programme, but also, how the specific skills were trained in the different study courses, which were more repetitive and little or insufficiently trained. For example, expert interviews with the industry showed that they expect graduates to have more financial skills. Expert interviews with students revealed a desire for more tour operator and group organisation business skills and a discontinuation of the opportunity to learn German after high school, even though it is one of the strategic tourism markets. There could be more focus on the practical applications of digital marketing, etc.

1.1.6. The University has defined principles of academic integrity (TU Ethics Policy, SAR, p. 9) and mechanisms for compliance with them (e.g. norms that are binding to TU employees in their attitude to work, in their interaction, and their relations with governmental and nongovernmental institutions and business partners; issues relating to restrictions or violations of academic freedom and rights are dealt with by the TU Academic Arbitration Tribunal, which operates following the Bylaws of the Academic Arbitration Court), according to TU Ethics Policy (approved by Senate Board 27.04.2017.). Anti-plagiarism regulations (Regulations on academic integrity and plagiarism, approved by TU Senate Board on 26.04.2019) and tools exist. Still, no specific examples of their use were mentioned during the expert interview with stakeholders (about their usage practices). As the use of artificial intelligence in the production of academic work increases dramatically, the use of fast and reliable tools will also become more critical, and guest lecturers from industry will also need to be able to do this. The development of a targeted and extensive internal quality culture of the university should be stimulated. Historically, TU has suffered more from reputational problems (e.g. those who can pay for the diploma and study - a reference to interviews from alumni). However, TU and especially those involved in the management of tourism studies have worked very hard over the years to raise the quality of studies and to dispel the myth that 'one can buy a diploma'.

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

Conclusions:

Tourism studies at TU are developed and managed strategically. Key measurable indicators are identified but should have been included in a comprehensive overview of the SAR. At the same time, each of the criteria included and analysed in this section (Management of the study field) has room for improvement (see above). The most important strengths and weaknesses in the management of the field are listed below.

Strengths:

- (1) Tourism studies have a strong tradition, form part of the identity of the entire TU campus, and have gained solid recognition in the sector.
- (2) Tourism studies are competitive and highly internationalised, attracting students from countries outside the EU in particular.
- (3) The management of the tourism studies field is qualified and experienced. They are enthusiastic about their work and able to motivate the rest of the team, including attracting professionals in the field of education.
- (4) Tourism studies at TU are a solid part of the national tourism knowledge transfer system.
- (5) Successful graduates are in demand in the tourism sector and have good career prospects.
- (6) Close cooperation with the industry and involvement of industry members in various stages of the study process.

Weaknesses:

- (1) The quality of studies is not included among the study field objectives.
- (2) The emphasis on the regional context as part of the tourism study's objective contradicts the positioning of the TU International Tourism faculty, given the high number of international students from outside the EU.
- (3) The TU Tourism Research Centre's potential is not fully exploited; it has too little capacity to be active and integrated into the study environment.
- (4) The UNWTO TedQual certificate is widely used in the field of study's marketing activities but is much less integrated into the study content and process.
- (5) There is some overlap between the two bachelor programmes (including courses and themes of bachelor theses), and given that students enter with different backgrounds in tourism, some themes will undoubtedly repeat in the successive master study programmes.
- (6) Online learning needs more contact hours, linkages to support resources available at the physical location, and procedural communication needs improvement.
- (7) Very high drop-out rates - number of students who do not continue their studies.
- (8) The financial literacy of graduating students is insufficient.
- (9) A hierarchical multi-level management structure (as in large universities) is relatively complex, resource-intensive and less efficient.
- (10) Relatively low awareness among lecturers of needing to give extended and individualised feedback during the study process (only a mark is often insufficient).
- (11) The low involvement of international academic staff in the study process contradicts the positioning of the Faculty of International Tourism.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1. The TU Development Strategy 2021-2025 (V46) and the Quality Policy (V66) are available on the TU website at www.turiba.lv. The TU Quality Management handbook outlines details regarding the maintenance of the TU quality management system, quality assurance responsibilities, and other related aspects. The roles, administration, rights, and responsibilities of each Faculty and Department are specified in the Faculty regulations.

SAR (p. 33) states that TU's quality policy emphasises a systematic approach, efficiency, and continuous improvement. TU's management aligns its quality policy with the ESG - 'Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area' (<https://ehea.info/page-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance>) and TU's development strategy, which is also publicly available (<https://www.turiba.lv/storage/files/bat-strategija-06-02-2024-eng-precizeta.pdf>). TU's development strategy is the primary university's document, revised every five years. TU identifies processes and maintains, utilises, and enhances a system for process measurement and benchmarking (Turiba University Quality Policy V66, 2022, available online: https://nodarbibas.turiba.lv/regdok_en.asp). In the SAR (p. 33), they state that the responsibility for enhancing TU's overall performance is shared by every organisational unit, its management, and its employees and students. This underscores students' crucial role in the university's success, making them feel valued and integral to the university's mission.

As written in the TU Quality Management Handbook, the TU quality management system is implemented following the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance requirements in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and using the basic guidelines of ISO 9001 standards. The basic principles of TU's quality management system are Orientation towards the customer (Customer-centric), Leadership and involvement of personnel, Process approach, Constant improvement, Evidence-based decision-making, and Customer relationship management (Quality Management Handbook, p. 2).

The quality management system follows the Deming cycle: Plan, Do, Check, and Act. Plan: Establish objectives and plan the processes. Do: Implement processes and change existing ones according to the plan. Check: Measure outcomes and compare them with the intended results. Act: Analyze the causes of any discrepancies and implement preventive measures (Quality Management Handbook, p. 3). Identified core and support processes are available in Annex 1 of the Quality management handbook (p. 4); 18 processes are described – 3 management processes, three core processes and 12 support processes.

The engagement in the implementation of the quality assurance policy and the maintenance and improvement of the quality management system is visible through the involvement of different stakeholders (internal and external) in the bodies of TU, like TU's Advisory board (<https://www.turiba.lv/en/university/advisory-board>), Council of the faculty of international tourism (<https://www.turiba.lv/en/university/faculty-councils#composition-of-the-council-of-the-faculty-of-international-tourism>), employers are offering the internship opportunities to students, and they are involved as guest lecturers and members of thesis defence committees.

TU uses the Regulations for Examinations, which state the general principles of assessment and specific procedures. The study course description formulates the planned study course results (knowledge, skills, competencies) and the evaluation criteria for each result. They are published in the BATIS system and available to students studying the relevant course (SAR, p. 16).

Interviews with stakeholders revealed that, although the procedures are well documented, their implementation in practice does not fully realise their potential. Survey feedback is not widely discussed with students; they must search for results themselves. Although the students' representatives involved in the Council of the Faculty of International Tourism meetings confirmed that they discussed it, there is a lack of communication with the rest of the students, so it is necessary to find effective ways to convey the findings.

In the experts' opinion, TU's quality assurance system ensures the continuous improvement, development, and effective functioning of the study field and its associated study programmes in its current form.

1.2.2. The Faculty Regulations outline the responsibilities of the Faculty, the Dean, and the Programme Directors for developing and approving study programmes. The procedures for creating

new study programmes, making changes to existing ones, and closing study programmes are detailed in the TU's Development and approval procedure for study programmes of study disciplines (2019). The development and approval of study programmes are organised systematically, according to internal procedures approved by the TU senate (SAR, p. 33). This systematic approach instils confidence in stakeholders about the thoroughness of the process.

The procedure for developing and reviewing study programmes is reasonable, systematic, and structured. It is publicly available for all TU stakeholders (https://batis.turiba.lv/Files/NDok/STF/Studiju_programmu_izstrades_manas_apstiprin_nolikums_P49_2.vers_ENG.docx). All the procedures are described clearly and comprehensively so that the sequence and responsibilities of the persons are transparent and easy to understand. Employers are well represented in the study field council.

1.2.3. The TU's "Procedure for Reviewing Applications of Students Received at the Study Information Center" regulates the submission of student complaints (SAR, p. 39). It is available to students on the BATIS internal information system and other TU regulatory documents. Complaints should be sent to the Study Information Centre to be processed. The regulations describe in detail the reception and handling of both verbal and written submissions, as well as records and preventive actions in the future.

The system for handling suggestions and complaints looks efficient and transparent. The students interviewed acknowledged the existence of these procedures and how to reach them.

1.2.4. Statistical data is collected following the TU Personal Data Processing and Protection Policy, as approved by Board Decision No. 21 on 08.05.2018. Processing of personal data is described on the TU website and is publicly available (<https://www.turiba.lv/en/data-processing>), as well as the contacts and the name of the data processing officer. Data on students, their performance, final paper topics, and other relevant information is collected and analysed to enhance study directions, improve study courses, and make amendments to the study programmes. Data on the number and status of students (updated monthly with external reports), mobility (continuously updated with reports twice a year), performance, internships, final paper topics (as needed), and national examination results (collected twice a year) is gathered regularly.

Students fill in surveys at the end of each study semester, upon completing the study course, and for the internship assessment. A sufficiently large percentage of students did not complete the surveys, so the dean introduced the mandatory completion of the annual survey. According to the dean, 10% of students were irritated with this. Still, of course, it is difficult to find a middle way that would make all the participants happy, so it is necessary to work on the students' awareness of the importance of their collaboration.

The questionnaires used by TU to survey its stakeholders are good. They enable obtaining basic information necessary to check the quality of education (Annex 8: Analysis of the results of surveys of students, graduates, and employers). However, there is a lack of an in-depth understanding of expectations and experiences in the educational process.

1.2.5. Details about the study programmes corresponding to the study field "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation" offered by TU can be found on their website in both languages, Latvian (<https://www.turiba.lv/lv/uznemsana/studiju-programmas-1>) and English (<https://www.turiba.lv/en/admission/study-programs>). In VIIS, there are three TU study programs with codes 42812 (2x) and 47812 under the Tourism and leisure organisation as an educational program group. The study programme Hotel Services Organizer (41811) is not registered on this platform. At the same time, there are two other licensed programmes, Conference and Seminar Organisation and Services (30P812013) and Tourism Product Development (30P812013), which are not accredited in this evaluation of the field of study. If TU is using study programme titles that do

not correspond to previously accredited titles, that should be corrected. These shortcomings should be urgently addressed.

There are also deficiencies in the E-platform (<https://eplatforma.aika.lv/>). Under the field of study Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation, the study programme "Tourism and Hospitality Management" is named "Tourism and Hospitality Business Management" and "Hotel Services Organiser" is called "Hospitality service." The study programme "Event Production and Management" is missing. These shortcomings should be taken care of as soon as possible.

There is also a Handbook for international students with essential information about the study process (https://www.turiba.lv/storage/files/bat-international-handbook-2022_2.pdf), which facilitates their integration and provides valuable information.

The website explains the admission criteria and application procedure (<https://www.turiba.lv/en/admission/admission>). The online application form is also available there, along with other useful information and study programme booklets.

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

The quality assurance system at TU is present, the processes are listed, the procedures are publicly available. In the implementation, however, the experts perceived the opportunity for improvements. There is a possibility to enhance the quality assurance system in certain areas, like the improvement of the feedback, and different ways of gathering information about the expectations and experiences of stakeholders.

Strengths:

- (1) Well-designed quality assurance procedures.
- (2) The TU website offers an informative brochure, the Handbook for International Students.
- (3) Employers are well represented in the study field council.

Weaknesses:

- (1) Communication between the study programme director and students on the survey results is insufficient. Insufficient data is collected (surveys are not mandatory) and there is a lack of more in-depth analysis.
- (2) Weak understanding of the importance of quality assurance among TU students.
- (3) Survey feedback is not widely discussed with students.
- (4) Lack of a more profound understanding of stakeholders' expectations and experiences.
- (5) Inaccuracies in the study programme state registers with the absence of the study programme "Hotel Services Organiser" (41811).

Assessment of the requirement [1]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

TU is continuously improving, developing, and controlling the performance of the study field by implementing its internal quality assurance system. TU's quality assurance system contributes to achieving the aims and learning outcomes, but the feedback to students (although existing) could be improved.

- 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

TU established a policy and procedures for quality assurance, they are publicly available on their website.

- 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

TU is developing and approving study programmes according to their internal regulation, study programmes are being regularly supervised.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

TU's quality assurance system contributes to achieving the aims and learning outcomes, but the feedback to students (although existing) could be improved.

- 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 existing internal procedures and mechanisms (Personnel policy, Rules for improving the professional competence of lecturers, Rules for financing scientific activity) ensure the academic staff's qualifications.

- 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

TU collects and analyses the information on study achievements, graduates employment, staff efficiency, available study funds and the KPI's. There are some potential areas of further improvement.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

TU is continuously improving, developing and efficiently performing the study field through the implementation of their quality assurance system.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1. According to the SAR (p. 43) and the information received during the expert visit in the meeting with the TU management, TU relies solely on private funding for its study provision and support. Its financial situation is consistently stable with the University ending each fiscal year in profit since its establishment. This is due to its effective business operations and strategic efforts in education. The University's budget is set by the annual funding plan, which is generated from tuition

fees, seminar participation fees, hotel services and other business-related income.

TU research funding comes from its resources and individual projects involving TU or specific faculty members. This funding supports participation in conferences, presentations, and translation of publications. Faculty members receive additional compensation for indexing their work in Scopus or WoS databases. Conference papers and publications focus on topics relevant to the study programmes, and the research findings are incorporated into the curriculum to enrich the study courses.

1.3.2. TU has the necessary resources to implement the study field and study programmes successfully:

TU offers well-equipped conference rooms, lecture halls, computer labs, and a modern library with a spacious reading area. Lecture rooms feature high-quality visual aids such as whiteboards, screens, multimedia projectors, and audio-video equipment. Students also have access to computerised workstations and multimedia projectors, both stationary and portable. The gym is available for academic use (SAR, p. 44).

The entire university campus is accessible to students for practical exercises. Specialised training spaces, including the StartUp Hotel, StartUp Agency, and Event Laboratory, have been established to develop skills in tourism, hospitality, customer service, and event production. Experts visited these premises, and although there were no students at the moment of the visit, the premises look extremely attractive and functional for the needs of the educational process. They enable both creativity and teamwork, the equipment is modern and suitable for training.

Business Incubator has been created to offer students hands-on experience in managing business operations. TU technical infrastructure and materials are continuously updated and modernised to ensure students can access the latest resources (SAR, p. 44).

The library is regularly restocked with new literature in both print and electronic formats. Unified systems and procedures have been established for purchasing the new literature—each year, departments collaborate with study programme directors to identify the needs.

Students enjoy complimentary access to the library and other academic resources and benefit from consultations with lecturers. They can seek assistance from the Study Information Center, departments, faculty, and the International Cooperation Department.

TU facilitates part-time distance learning (e-learning) via the Moodle platform. The IT department provides essential technological support and operates and maintains the TU platform BATIS. Study courses involving hotel or service booking training utilise industry-standard software such as Fidelio and Amadeus.

1.3.3. The information about the availability of TU library services is included in the course descriptions for students and on the TU website (<https://www.turiba.lv/en/for-students/library>). The library's primary goal is to support education, postgraduate training and scientific research by providing access to the latest academic and scientific literature. This includes not only a wide range of books and periodicals but also online and local databases, as well as internet resources. The library is well-equipped to support a successful study process for Latvian and international students. Unified systems and procedures have been established to purchase the new literature - each year, departments collaborate with study programme directors to identify the needs. Department heads, study programme directors, and library staff create a list of necessary book purchases and electronic database subscriptions for each academic year (SAR p. 45).

According to SAR p.46, the library has a collection of 675 books related to the direction of tourism and hospitality (a total of 2787 copies). The library has a collection of 520 books in English (a total of 1864 copies). TU library offers open access with an electronic system for borrowing and returning materials. It also features an electronic catalogue for literature, books, periodicals, and student papers through the library's information system, ALICE: <https://w3i.turiba.lv/Alise/en/home.aspx>.

The library offers a comfortable workspace, covering a total area of 1,532 m². It features an extensive collection of open-access books, an electronic catalogue for users and a reading room with the latest media publications. There are 107 workspaces available, 32 of which are equipped with computers, a quiet reading room and spaces for group work. A range of library services is available to students and other users: <https://www.turiba.lv/en/for-students/library>. Experts visited the library. The modern premises allow students to study there or work, and to use the available resources, with the help of qualified librarians, if needed. Books and online resources for study and research are available in sufficient quantities.

Library hours are Monday from 11:00 to 18:15, Tuesday and Wednesday from 10:30 to 18:15, Thursday from 11:00 to 18:15, Friday from 10:00 to 17:00, and Saturday from 10:30 to 16:00. The reading room is open 24/7 from Monday to Saturday. According to experts, the library's working hours are suitable.

1.3.4. TU's IT Department is responsible for maintaining the IT infrastructure, maintaining and upgrading computer equipment and networks, and developing the functionality of the TU information system BATIS. BATIS is designed to provide students with all relevant information regarding their studies - class schedules and course assessments. Through BATIS, students can access study-related regulations, study plans, academic calendars, and other essential resources. The system is available in Latvian and English. To meet the growing demand for modern digital solutions, a mobile app has also been developed and made accessible to students. BATIS includes a dedicated section for lecturers, allowing them to manage their courses, view student lists and track academic progress. In this section, lecturers can post messages and notifications specific to a study course for students to read on their BATIS accounts. Lecturers can upload and manage study course materials that are accessible to students. During the interviews during the expert visit, there were numerous complaints from students and graduates from all study programmes about the inadequacy of the poorly designed BATIS system for an innovative and modern study process. There were also complaints about insufficient use of the Moodle platform for distance learning.

TU uses the Webex platform to facilitate remote learning. According to the Study Regulations, students who cannot attend a lecture in person can join the class remotely via Webex as listeners. Remote attendance is not considered official lecture attendance. To join a class remotely, students must register on the BATIS by 8:00 a.m. on the day of the class, a link to the lecturer's virtual room will be available in the BATIS.

Moodle is an online learning platform used by distance learning (e-studies) students and lecturers who manage the distance learning process. Through Moodle, students can access course materials, video lectures, learning outcomes, and assignments, submit their work, and communicate with the teaching staff. During the expert interviews with distance learners, there was no confirmation that Moodle is used as the leading platform. The materials are reportedly hosted on the BATIS platform. Distance learning relies on independent study, which makes the methodological quality of teaching aids crucial. The development of distance learning materials involves enhancing them with video content and lectures. The DigiCom room and equipment at Turiba University are utilised to produce video materials. A designated staff member is responsible for handling and editing these videos. The creation and development of e-learning resources are funded through the TU budget and additional support from external sources such as the "La Fondation pour la Formation Hôtelière" foundation (SAR, p. 48).

1.3.5. According to SAR (p. 48), the TU teaching staff's common platform lies in the professionalism of all employees, strong teamwork, and individual drive. TU prioritises the ongoing education and skills development of teaching staff. Employee competence is essential for TU, as it helps to implement the strategy and reach goals.

TU attracts lecturers by collaborating with the industry and recruiting specific experts. The

participation of industry experts is crucial in the educational process as lecturers with practical experience in tourism, hospitality, and event production offer theoretical knowledge and real-world insights. This approach prepares students to tackle practical challenges they may face in their careers. TU's involvement in professional associations and collaboration with industry companies allows for developing specialised study courses that meet industry needs, enabling educators with diverse professional backgrounds to contribute meaningfully. These experts serve as guest lecturers, further enhancing students' competencies.

According to SAR (pp. 49-50), the processes for attracting and employing academic staff at TU are governed by the Human Resources policy, the Academic Staff Election Regulations, the General and Academic Staff Personal Data Processing and Protection Regulations, and the Human Resources Department Regulations. The Academic Staff Election Regulations are particularly significant in the recruitment of academic staff, available only in Latvian: https://batis.turiba.lv/Files/NDok/STF/Akademiska_personala_velesanu_nolikums_N25_11.vers.docx There's a shallow involvement of international academic staff in the study process, which contradicts the positioning of the Faculty of International Tourism. The level of English language proficiency in the management and especially for delivery of TU studies should be higher (aiming at C1 level) (SAR, Annex 12, Apliecinajums par ENG zināšanām_eng.edoc).

1.3.6. The professional development of the academic staff is organised following the "Regulations for the Improvement of Professional Competence of Lecturers at Turiba University," developed in compliance with Article 21, Chapter 5, and Article 5, Chapter 26 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, which defines the rights and obligations of academic personnel. It provides an incentive-based remuneration system.

Within the framework of the European Social Fund (ESF) project, professional competence development courses were offered, including English language training for university management. Another recent seminar introduced participants to innovations in AI and its application in the study process. Lecturers from the Department of Tourism and Hospitality are also regularly invited to industry events such as the Latvian Tourism Forum, the Balttour Forum, and related industry events to stay updated on the latest trends and developments in the tourism and hospitality sector. Professors receive bonuses for high-quality publications and research work (SAR, pp. 51-52).

The results and effectiveness of the implemented measures have been considered (SAR, p. 52): "Lecturers found the training seminar "The Use of Digital Tools in the Study Process in Remote and Hybrid Lectures" highly useful."

The professors' satisfaction with the financial stimulation offered for publications is commendable. However, a need for more extensive international projects is evident for high-quality publications. This can only be realised by developing TU's staff and gradually increasing the number of elected full-time professors.

1.3.7. Lecturers in the study field fulfil their assigned academic workload, including delivering lectures, conducting practical work, preparing teaching and methodological materials, and evaluating routine and final examinations. The Head of the Department is responsible for planning the lecturers' workload to prevent overloading. Workload plans, estimates, and any changes are managed under the supervision of the Head of the Department (SAR, pp. 52-53).

The class schedule determines the teaching workload for lecturers, the timetable for consultations and exams approved by the Rector, and orders from the dean regarding the supervision and defence of student work and qualifications. The research workload varies and is linked to the lecturers' involvement in different research types — those conducted in collaboration with TU's Project Division and applied research projects carried out in cooperation with the industry (SAR, p. 54).

The teachers interviewed confirmed that their academic, research, and administrative workloads are

balanced, although none of them had considered the possibility of a Sabbatical year.

1.3.8. One of the critical roles of TU's Student Self-Government (SSG) is to represent students, try to understand students' needs, interests, and suggestions for improving the academic process, and make proposals for these enhancements. Students receive support from various sources, including academic staff, administrative personnel, study support units, and Student Self-Government. International students receive additional assistance from the International Cooperation Department. Academic staff offer guidance on study course content, requirements, and further information. Administrative staff help students integrate into the study process and provide advice on study procedures. The Study Information Centre offers guidance on signing agreements, continuing or terminating studies, changing study formats, and other study-related matters. The library assists students in utilising various information resources. The International Cooperation Department also offers psychological support for international students. The foreign internship coordinator assists with international internships, while a career advisor helps students find internships and job opportunities.

Interviewed students confirmed they receive the necessary support, and the framework for identifying these needs has been established. Some of the international students expressed the feeling of being partly disregarded from Student Council activities in their extracurricular social life, as communication reached them only in Latvian.

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

TU resources and provision of the study field can be rated as sufficient. Library equipment and available digital resources (e-books, databases, software) make it possible to conclude that learning resources and their availability are good. The academic, research and workload of the teaching staff is balanced. Students receive support from various sources.

Strengths:

- (1) The established system and procedures for the improvement and purchase provision.
- (2) Library resources (books, e-books, databases, periodicals) and equipment are widely available and accessible to students.
- (3) The implemented system for funding scientific research is sufficiently effective.

Weaknesses:

- (1) Not sufficient use of the Moodle platform for distance learning.
- (2) Poorly designed TU information system BATIS.
- (3) Low involvement of international academic staff in the study process.
- (4) Lack of large international projects.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1. In the observed period, there were 123 publications, 112 participation times in conferences, 48 participation times in projects, and three doctoral theses (Annex 13 - Quantitative data on research activities relevant to the field of study). The research areas reflect the needs of the national economy and trends in tourism, hospitality and event industry. Those areas are adequately connected to the main goals of institutional development, based on cooperation supported by the Tourism Research Centre (TRC) - promoted as the only entity in the Baltics, and Turiba Business Incubator (SAR, p. 56). During the assessment visit and interviews with academic staff and students, the claimed position of TRC as a place where academics, students and practitioners develop

scientific and applied research in tourism and hospitality daily, strengthening students' competencies in the labour market, was not proved.

Turiba University possesses the UNWTO TedQual certificate, which is accredited by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) for two study programmes (bachelor's — "Tourism and Hospitality Management " and master's — "Tourism Strategic Management") that promote quality education, training, and research.

Research lines are well-defined, with a concentration on sustainable tourism as the main direction of scientific research. Other research directions are strategic tourism management, financial management, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in tourism and hospitality, destination marketing, nature-based tourism, rural tourism, event management, tourism history, intercultural communication, Baltic Sea region, etc. (Annex 14. List of the publications of the study field "Hotel and restaurant service, tourism and leisure organisation" for the last six years). During the assessment visit, the management staff showed clear ideas about the institutional goals concerning research. Lecturers regularly attend international scientific conferences to get the latest tourism and hospitality industry news and thus get research directions (Annex 10: Biographies of the teaching staff members). Most of the teaching staff, apart from academic experience, have relevant experience in the tourism and hospitality business and show motivation to further research development.

During the assessment visit, the academic staff mentioned that there had been intentions to improve the scientific journal *Acta Prosperitatis* indexing published by the TU.

The Faculty Council represents the highest collegiate institution for providing quality studies, scientific research, and methodological activities (SAR, p. 22). While each lecturer continues self-improvement and scientific research work on the selected topic (SAR, p. 23), there is significant potential for more international cooperation in research and the development of more international research projects. Increased involvement in big international projects may lead to knowledge transfer and enhance the competitiveness of the study programmes.

During the assessment visit, it was evident that academia-industry connections (connections with the labour market) are powerful. This was proven during the meeting with representatives of employer companies that provide numerous job and internship opportunities for Turiba University students and graduates, underscoring the practical relevance of the university's education and research.

1.4.2. The research topics correspond to the courses developed by the lecturers. Different research questions and problems in contemporary tourism and hospitality were addressed to advance knowledge and prepare students for today's knowledge-driven world since doing research is not only for academics.

The research lines are mainly integrated with the study courses, which ensures a connection between teaching and research and good didactic transposition. Students are involved in some research activities and organising academic events, which helps them acquire skills, including drawing conclusions based on available evidence and academic integrity.

Scientific research of the teaching staff is mainly applied in the study process, partially by encouraging students to develop research papers focusing on companies in the tourism sector. However, students' research activities should go beyond the obligatory final-year thesis. Building capacities in research has a long-term impact on learning outcomes, preparing the students for the job market. Students can strengthen their critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills by integrating research into academic courses.

During the assessment visit, the academic staff described the links between their research and the study courses they teach. A specific approach is given to the creative activities of the academic staff that are closely related to their teaching (SAR, p. 59), as well as to publishing the results of the student research (SAR, p. 58).

1.4.3. Turība University has initiated partnerships with over 100 Universities in Europe and worldwide. The study field has continuous international cooperation with many universities in Erasmus+, bilateral projects, and La Fondation pour la Formation Hôtelière. However, these networks and partnerships are underutilised since there is very little international research and other projects in which the Faculty of International Tourism participates. Existing projects are:

- * Nord Tour Net project focused on communication in tourism, hospitality and event management;
- * Climan project with partner Universities from Georgia and Ukraine focusing on development research centres on climate change;
- * SECA project focused on sustainable business tools like videos and social media on sustainable entrepreneurship.

The Faculty of International Tourism tends to succeed in excellence in science, but the number of significant international research projects is low. Also, the number of international teaching staff is small, which decreases the possibilities for international research project development. Thus, international cooperation in research projects needs to be developed further. More international collaboration in publications should be encouraged.

1.4.4. Although there are international publications in remarkable journals and publishers, most are local (not indexed in international scientific databases), which may limit their impact. In the reposted period, the academic staff published about 150 scientific publications, including 22 indexed in Scopus or Web of Science databases (SAR, p. 64). Some papers marked in the lecturers' CVs as published in WoS relate to Emerging WoS. The improvements have been noticeable in recent years, but additional efforts are needed in publishing strategy to increase the number of publications in relevant international databases. Also, papers related to key academic topics in tourism and hospitality are underrepresented.

In the annex of SAR (Annex 14. List of the publications of the study field "Hotel and restaurant service, tourism and leisure organisation" for the last six years), it is noticeable that teaching staff have been active in research in the last six years. They have published articles, peer-reviewed publications, monographs, and conference papers, but the number of publications in WoS/Scopus or by internationally top-rated publishing houses is low. Some monographs and other publications are in Latvian, which limits their international use although they can be useful in teaching. In Annex 14. (List of the publications of the study field "Hotel and restaurant service, tourism and leisure organisation" for the last six years) some articles are marked as indexed in WoS, while they currently belong to Emerging WoS).

Turība University funds the publication of several scientific monographs and annual conference participation. In SAR (p. 61), it is underlined that the total planned funding allocated by the University for science and academic staff growth exceeded EUR 100.000 in 2023. Thus, academic staff are motivated by the financial compensation of publishing scientific publications indexed in the scientific databases of SCI, SSCI SCOPUS, Web of Science and Engineering Village. That may lead to promotion and improvement of the quality of research.

1.4.5 In TU, students' involvement in scientific research is promoted starting from practice-based research in a short-cycle professional higher education study programme. Ties between study courses and teaching staff research are established in students' participation in research projects, particularly when it comes to students' theses but also in the preparation of scientific publications. Promotion of students' involvement in science and research is also encouraged in the TU Student Research Work Conference (<https://www.turiba.lv/en/research/student-research>) and the TAVA (The Latvian Investment and Development Agency's Tourism Department) competition. Students have some opportunities to be engaged in academic activities during their studies while getting acquainted with the topics of highly evaluated research work. Apart from classroom opportunities, students also develop more intense interaction with their research mentors, leading to career

guidance.

Turība University management continuously encourages students to present their research at academic conferences, allowing them to collaborate closely with the academic staff, have additional learning opportunities, and strengthen their presentation skills. Through the existing TU industry cooperation networks, students are engaged in research projects of the Latvian Restaurant Association, the Latvian Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators, and industry companies. During the assessment visit and discussion with students, it was noticeable that students observed how the theories and concepts they have learned in the study courses are applied within the TU cooperation networks allowing them active learning and pursuing their research interest.

1.4.6. TU management pays attention to innovation, which is visible in the established Business incubator, which is an environment adapted for developing business ideas and innovative solutions. To ensure a student-centered approach and intellectual curiosity, the University provides that students can work individually or as a team in the Business incubator. During the assessment visit and discussion with lecturers and students, it was noticeable that the capacities of the Business incubator were insufficiently used.

UNWTO TedQual certification (2022) supports TU's tourism education, training, and research quality. UNWTO TedQual represents external international assessment, which is also important for international rating of the study programmes.

Academic staff permanently improve their skills and self-competence in seminars and training programmes (for example, the ones offered by La Fondation pour la Formation Hôtelière, etc.), what is visible in teachers' CVs (Anex 10 - Biographies of the teaching staff members). One of the innovations refers to the "Business Night" idea competition, which corresponds to creativity and gaining practical skills. The development of e-courses, Moodle, etc., reflects that attention is being paid to applying innovative learning methods.

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

The research areas are adequately defined and correspond to the institutional goals while connected with teaching activities. Students' involvement in research is promoted. The research outcomes fit in the number, while there is a need to increase the number of publications in journals indexed in Scopus and WoS and papers published by international publishers. Innovative teaching methods are visible while teaching staff tend to improve their knowledge through seminars and training programmes.

Strengths:

- (1) Consistent research areas.
- (2) Integration between teaching and research.
- (3) Innovations connected with student-centred teaching.

Weaknesses:

- (1) The capacities of the Business incubator are insufficiently used.
- (2) Internationalisation strategies have not been fully developed.
- (3) Insufficient number of publications in indexed journals and by international publishers.
- (4) Insufficient number of large international research projects.
- (5) No grant system for professors to encourage the development of targeted scientific research.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Research lines and their integration into teaching are acceptable and suitable for developing student-centred activities in the study field. Although there have been improvements in research, the number of publications in indexed journals and by international publishers is low. The number of international research projects (particularly big ones) should be increased.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1. The study field at Turība University actively participates in various collaboration frameworks with Latvian institutions. As a result, students benefit from internship placements, job opportunities within industry companies, guest lectures, and study tours. This cooperation enhances communication and engagement with industry professionals and employers.

Joining non-governmental organisations, such as professional associations within the specific sector, is the primary method for expanding the network of cooperation partners and establishing new connections with companies in the industry, such as destination management organisations, travel agents and tour operators, hotels, restaurants, and venues.

During the meeting with representatives of employer organisations, TU's high reputation among employees of tourism and hospitality companies was highlighted, and the motivation and robust preparedness of TU graduates for work was highly appreciated. Employer representatives suggested introducing a new 1.5-year professional master's study programme for tourism and hospitality management. Employers themselves are frequent and regular guest lecturers at TU.

According to the information obtained during the expert visit and the list of cooperation partners in Annex No 15, positively notable is the cooperation with professional employer associations – Latvian Hotel and Restaurant Association (LVRA) in organising conferences on current topics for the tourism and hospitality industry, and Association of Latvian travel agents and tour operators (ALTA) in hosting presentations and discussions within the framework of the international travel trade fair Balttour (SAR, pp. 67-68).

Two other cooperation agreements are particularly noteworthy: Mogotel Hotel Group and SJSC Latvijas Valsts Meži (SAR, p. 68).

The collaboration with Mogotel Hotel Group is extensive, including opportunities for students to participate in internships within Mogotel's international hotel network. Mogotel also provides guest lectures and contributes to the development of study programmes, fostering a closer connection between academic learning and practical application in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

As part of the collaboration with Latvijas Valsts Meži (LVM), students can engage in practical learning by conducting case studies on tourism and recreation sites in the country's forest areas. Additionally, students have access to internships and study trips led by LVM experts, which enhances their understanding of forests as healthy environments for both local and international students (SAR, p. 69).

An excellent example of collaboration with a municipal institution is the partnership with the Riga Investment and Tourism agency, which has resulted in the recognition of the "Guide Work" study course organised by TU and in granting a license for Riga tour guides upon graduation from the course. TU's study programme "Tourism and Hospitality Management" offers this study course free of charge as a part B limited elective course (SAR, p. 69).

TU has established several cooperation agreements with various Latvian higher education institutions. These agreements were created in response to the implemented study programmes and aim to ensure the continuity of the study process in the event that study programmes are discontinued. To facilitate student transfers if necessary, cooperation agreements have also been made with the University of Economics and Culture and Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences.

1.5.2. According to SAR pp. 70-72, cooperation with various institutions abroad is implemented in the framework of Erasmus+ mobility, double diploma and bilateral exchange programmes. Information is available on the TU website: <https://www.turiba.lv/en/for-students/exchange-programs>. TU has established partnerships with over 100 universities worldwide. These cooperation agreements enable the organisation of higher-quality scientific forums, facilitate student exchanges, and support training and study opportunities for lecturers abroad.

The current cooperation prioritises existing networks, starting with La Fondation pour la Formation Hôtelière, then UNWTO TedQual, and finally, the partner universities.

Participation in La Fondation pour la Formation Hôtelière offers significant support for the training of specialists in the tourism and hospitality sector and their career development in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. TU has been granted financial assistance for acquiring faculty computers, organising student study trips, and enhancing study materials, including e-learning resources, as part of the "La Fondation pour la Formation Hôtelière" projects.

During the accreditation period, UNWTO TedQual accreditation has been granted twice to the "Tourism and Hospitality Management" bachelor's study programme and the "Tourism Strategic Management" master's study programme. In the evaluation process, compliance was assessed at 97.39%. TedQual certification allows TU to follow trends and analyse the content of study programmes similar to those of UNWTO.

TU participates in various projects in collaboration with international institutions. For instance, within the Climan project whose objective is to help partner universities in Georgia and Ukraine to become research centres on climate change, the following initiatives have been implemented: existing master's study programmes have been enhanced by incorporating climate management modules, climate change management advisory centres have been established at partner universities to ensure their sustainability, the institutional capacity of partner universities has been strengthened to develop recommendations for the industrial, transport, energy, and tourism sectors, along with local governance institutions.

TU was part of the "SECA" project which focuses on creating guides, videos, and social media content related to sustainable entrepreneurship. As part of this initiative, lecturers participated in a five-day training session in Germany, where they collaborated with colleagues from Finland and Germany to enhance their knowledge of teaching methods and approaches for sustainable entrepreneurship topics.

As part of the TRAIN-e-HOTEL project which aims to create training materials for students in the tourism sector, TU students were engaged in various educational activities to gain insight into the tourism industry, focusing specifically on hotels and hospitality companies.

TU collaborates with foreign universities to develop joint projects that encourage interaction among students from various countries, facilitate experience exchanges, and engage in practical activities within study courses in an international setting. For instance, the cooperation with Tio University of Applied Sciences students in the Netherlands and Swiss higher tourism education institution HFT Luzern resulted in student study visits, collaborative work and discussions.

TU continuously follows the best practices and trends of HEIs abroad, specialising in a particular field of study. The cooperation partners are selected based on the specific features of the study field and the relevant study programmes.

1.5.3. The Erasmus+ mobility programme primarily attracts international students and academic staff; the procedures are outlined in the "Erasmus+ Mobility Programme Regulations" (approved by the Senate on 22.05.2019). The system is implemented, clear, and accessible. The Dean and the Vice-Rector for Study Development and International Cooperation are closely involved and can provide the necessary support.

Students enrolled in the first-cycle professional bachelor's study programmes "Tourism and

Hospitality Management" and "Event Production and Management" and the second-cycle higher professional master's study programme "Tourism Strategic Management" utilize the opportunities offered by exchange programmes.

Incoming mobility occurs within study programmes delivered in English, including the first-cycle professional bachelor's study programme "Tourism and Hospitality Management" and the second-cycle professional master's study programme "Tourism Strategic Management".

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of foreign students has declined. The restrictions imposed due to the pandemic and its impact on the tourism sector have also affected education related to this field. Similar trends are observed in the mobility indicators for incoming and outgoing students and lecturers.

The TU International Cooperation Department plans and organises mobility within TU Faculty of International Tourism. The dean, in cooperation with the heads of departments, makes decisions on lecturers' outgoing and incoming mobility.

Although TU assesses the mobility results positively, during the expert meetings with teaching staff and students, it was concluded that there is room for opportunities and growth.

Information and a list of mobility programmes for cooperation universities: <https://www.turiba.lv/en/for-students/exchange-programs/>.

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

Cooperation with other institutions in Latvia is well-established and closely linked to the study programmes. Collaboration in the form of internships works very well with the industry. Students and teaching staff's outgoing mobility is modest, and the number of incoming students and teaching staff is small.

Students primarily benefit from Erasmus+ opportunities. However, it's crucial to note that TU acknowledges the pressing need to develop mobility. The lack of a clearly defined strategy to achieve this goal is a significant area that requires immediate attention.

Strengths:

- (1) Strong cooperation with employers, organisations, non-governmental institutions, and higher education institutions providing internships and job placements, information, experience and good practice exchange.
- (2) Regular involvement of Latvian employers in delivering guest lectures ensures the sharing of practical experience.
- (3) Regular cooperation with different institutions abroad, including membership and networking in various international organisations and HEI.

Weaknesses:

- (1) While the cooperation with various institutions abroad is primarily through the Erasmus+ mobility framework, it's clear that TU need to diversify their cooperation channels. This will not only enhance their international ties but also bring in fresh perspectives and opportunities for the students and staff.
- (2) Limited incoming mobility of students and teaching staff.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The cooperation with Latvian and foreign organisations guarantees the fulfilment of the study

field's objectives, providing internships and job placements, information, experience and good practice exchange. There is a lack of other cooperation channels besides the use of Erasmus+.

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

Analysis

1.6.1. The previous assessment of the study field was in 2013. Specific recommendations were given to improve study programmes in the study field, which had to be fulfilled in the coming period. The recommendations included both received in the expert evaluation report of the study field in 2013 and based on the evaluation visit in 2018 (recommendations were made for the study programme "Management of Business and Recreational Events" (current title - "Event Production and Management")).

Based on Annex 19 (Follow-up report on recommendations received), some of the expert recommendations from previous evaluation procedures have not been implemented or have been implemented only partly.

Recommendations for the study field "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation" included 1) developing joint study programmes in cooperation with foreign educational institutions; 2) identifying a specific niche for study field research needs; 3) strengthen the link between the field of study and the research work of students and academic staff; 4) encourage students to take elective courses in other Latvian and foreign HEI; 5) expand opportunities for joint research between students and academic staff from TU and foreign universities.

Recommendations for the study programme "Event Production and Management" in 2018 included developing appropriate course descriptions, including a plan, rules, requirements, and assessment criteria for part-time distance learning; improving the content of tourism-related study courses by including related topics to the events sector, and developing common model themes for theses and bachelor theses closely linked to the events sector.

The recommendation to develop a joint study programme in cooperation with foreign HEI has not been fulfilled. According to SAR (p. 75), since 2014, TU has prioritised international cooperation through various programmes, including Erasmus+, the Double Diploma Programme, and Bilateral Exchange Programmes. The university collaborates with 64 institutions through bilateral exchanges, 125 via Erasmus+, and 10 in the Double Diploma Programme. It is also part of the UN Ted. Qual network and La Fondation pour la Formation Hôtelière network. According to SAR (p. 76), the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the tourism, hospitality, and events sectors, influencing the university's development priorities, so the recommendation from 2013 about the new Master's programme with an existing partner was not fulfilled. From 2020 to 2022, Turība focused on adapting study programmes and ensuring student internships despite industry challenges. Although some study programmes are not conducted in partnership with foreign institutions, TU promotes mobility opportunities for students and lecturers. Between 2013 and 2023, 18 lecturers participated in international mobility projects. Students also benefit from programmes such as Erasmus+ and the Double Diploma, which offer international study experiences. The pandemic caused a decline in student mobility due to restrictions, but the university is exploring opportunities for a new master's study programme focused on tourism and services. The university's appeal to international students remains strong, positioning it as a desirable destination for international exchanges. Experts would encourage TU to implement the 2013 experts' group recommendation. Annex 9 states a "Follow-up report on recommendations received" is already scheduled.

The recommendation to identify a specific niche for study research needs is partially implemented. According to Annex 19, the experts suggest updating aspects of digitisation and complementing it with action research as this study field develops. The research direction at TU aligns with its vision of

integrating business into every study programme, with a particular focus on tourism, hospitality, and event production. According to Annex 19, "Follow-up report on recommendations received" and SAR (p. 76), key research areas include the digitalisation of tourism and hospitality services, digital transformation in business, and the development opportunities within the tourism and hospitality sectors. Topics like the export potential of Latvian tourism services and international service promotion are central to the research. Sustainability is a significant emphasis in the university's research. This is exemplified by TU's signing of a Memorandum of Commitment to Sustainable Business in the Catering Industry, which promotes sustainable practices through 19 principles based on international standards. The university's involvement in sustainability is integrated into its curriculum to equip future industry professionals with knowledge of responsible business practices. This commitment was highlighted during the International Sustainability Conference hosted by TU. According to Annex 19, the recommendation to strengthen the link between the field of study and the research work of students and academic staff is implemented. At TU, scientific activities and publications are closely tied to the content of study programmes, focusing on academic and popular scientific outputs. Research projects often involve collaboration between academic staff and students, mainly through bachelor's and master's theses in tourism monitoring, sustainable tourism development, and dark tourism. Students must align their final research papers with the university's relevant research directions. Lecturers actively involve students in these projects, guiding them in specialised areas. For instance, an associate professor engages students in research on sustainable tourism business environments, while another professor supervises research on employee competencies in the tourism and hospitality sectors. One professor focuses on the catering business environment; another supervises applied research in industry needs, service development, and sales. This collaborative approach helps students develop research skills related to industry trends and academic priorities.

According to SAR (p. 77) the recommendation to encourage the students to take elective courses in other Latvian and foreign HEI is partially fulfilled. Through cooperation with the International College of Cosmetology until 2024, students in the bachelor's study programme "Management of International Tourism Industry Companies" at TU could take Part C of the optional study courses offered by the College. These study courses included holistic health, salon management, and nutrition studies. Additionally, students participating in Erasmus+, Bilateral Exchange, and Double Diploma programmes are encouraged to take optional study courses at foreign institutions. These study courses can be recognised as part of their study programme after approval from the Erasmus+ coordinator and the Dean. Students are encouraged to take a course as an additional learning opportunity if it cannot be equated. However, access to optional courses at other Latvian institutions has been limited due to the lack of similar study programmes in Riga, restricting students' choices. According to the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Chapter 1, Section 6 (on Academic Freedom) where it is stated: "The freedom of studies shall be expressed in the rights of students (...) to draw up and acquire the free elective part of individual studies." TU is still willing to offer specific study courses for part C, which should not be like that.

The recommendation to expand the opportunities for joint research between students and academic staff from TU and foreign universities has been implemented. According to SAR (p. 76), since the last accreditation, TU has expanded joint research opportunities with foreign universities for students and academic staff. Key initiatives since 2013 include establishing a Project Department to drive research and fundraising and strengthening participation in international cooperation networks like La Fondation Pour La Formation Hôtelière and UNWTO TedQual. TU has also expanded its Double Diploma Programme, allowing students to conduct research with partner institutions such as Excelia Business School and Rey Juan Carlos University, with plans to include Lapland University of Applied Sciences. Faculty involvement in international cooperation is documented annually, and a partnership with Lapland University has led to joint research projects, including a 2023 sustainable tourism initiative in Tukums. These efforts demonstrate TU's commitment to enhancing international

research collaboration and student opportunities.

Following an evaluation visit in July 2018, several changes were approved for the TU former study programme "Management of Business and Recreational Events" (now - "Event Production and Management"), along with key recommendations for improvement. These included 1) developing course descriptions for part-time distance learning, 2) enhancing tourism-related study courses with event sector topics, and 3) aligning thesis themes more closely with the events sector. Since these changes, the study programme has introduced appropriate course descriptions and now offers both full-time and part-time formats. Event production has been integrated as a form of entrepreneurship, enriching the curriculum. While no standardised thesis themes are offered, students are encouraged to explore creative topics reviewed and approved by the department. These updates have positively impacted the study programme, as reflected by increased enrolments since 2019. Additionally, the study programme's name change has expanded its scope to cover tourism, hospitality, and events, enhancing its appeal and relevance.

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

Several of the recommendations from the previous study field assessment procedure were fulfilled. TU has shown a very good example of how changes are possible by implementing them. Still, some recommendations have only partially been implemented, mostly related to encouraging students to go on exchange programmes, developing collaborations with other foreign HEI, updating aspects of digitisation and complimenting them with action research as this field of study develops.

Strengths:

- (1) TU has demonstrated the possibility of introducing changes in organisation and study content.
- (2) It has demonstrated that changes can be introduced both at the level of TU as well as the level of assessed study programmes.

Weaknesses:

- (1) Some of the experts' recommendations from previous evaluation procedures (encouraging students to go on exchange programmes, developing collaborations with other foreign HEI, updating aspects of digitisation and complimenting them with action research as this field of study develops) weren't considered or have been implemented only partly which creates long-term shortages in achieving the aims of the study field.

Assessment of the requirement [4]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Some deficiencies are still present, for instance, to update aspects of digitisation and to develop a joint study programme in cooperation with foreign HEI.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

- (1) To develop and implement structured, supportive guidelines for industry professionals who lecture, who need to be sufficiently trained in innovative pedagogical approaches, or are less experienced in different approaches to assessing learning outcomes.

(2) The Master's study programme should be open to students with diverse undergraduate backgrounds, including those without a tourism background. To ensure a competitive advantage in the tourism sector, additional admission criteria, such as a motivation letter, should be introduced to demonstrate how prior study combined with tourism studies at the master's level can be advantageous.

(3) To achieve more significant commitment from students in filling out surveys, it would be beneficial to pay more attention to the students' information - to acquaint them with the importance of sharing their opinions to ensure the quality of education. It would be recommendable to start with this already at the time of enrollment/in the first week at the faculty. Eventually, the quality culture will be established and embedded in the stakeholders' behaviour.

(4) The student council and its representatives should be more engaged to help students better understand the importance of completing surveys thoughtfully and assist in sharing the survey results.

(5) Consider introducing occasional focus groups with students of study programmes and employers; it would be an additional asset to deepen cooperation in quality assurance in the information intake process.

(6) TU's available resources (incubator, labs) should be used in the learning process, especially for the students studying remotely, inviting them to spend condensed time periods at the TU premises.

(7) Establish a system of grants for professors and researchers to encourage the development of targeted scientific research, particularly in areas directly related to tourism, hospitality and public events.

Long-term recommendations

(1) A comprehensive and effective approach to reducing the high drop-out rate needs to be developed, including a better understanding of the causes.

(2) The selection criteria for potential students, aligning the marketing promise with the study programme's actual content, and providing social support during studies need to be improved.

(3) Development and implementation of a modern e-learning environment and uniformisation of platforms (both BATIS and Moodle are used; many complaints about BATIS design and functionality).

(4) Update aspects of digitisation and complement it with action research as this study field develops.

(5) Consider implementing the recommendation by the expert group (2013) on developing joint study programmes with foreign educational institutions, which will improve the competitiveness of the study programme and help to address some of the problems identified (internationalisation, international projects, guest lecturers from abroad, etc.).

II - "Hotel Services Organizer " ASSESSMENT

II - "Hotel Services Organizer " ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. Hotel Services Organizer (41811) is a part-time distance learning study programme implemented in Latvia with a length of 2 years and four months. As a short-cycle professional higher education study programme, it is designed by the requirements of the professional standard “Hotel Services Organizer” (<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-217.pdf>). It fully complies with the study field. Complementary to the bachelor's degree study programme in tourism. According to the interviews with the industry, this qualification is in demand. Although it is not the most prestigious and well-paid job in the sector, it is the choice of the students who are already working in the field but do not have the appropriate education and training.

2.1.2. The study programme's title corresponds to the profession's standard title. The code of the study programme is according to the Latvian Education Classification (41 for Professional higher education (college), short-cycle and 811 for “Hotel and restaurant services”). It can be completed after secondary education—obtained qualification: Hotel Services Organizer.

The aim of the study programme meets the requirements of the professional standard (Annex 3. Compliance of the Study programme “Hotel Services Organizer” with the professional standard), preparing hospitality specialists for work in hotels and other accommodation industry enterprises who demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the organisation and provision of hotel services, understand the place of hotels in the tourism industry structure, can participate and reasonably solve the tasks necessary for the daily work functions of the enterprise in providing and selling services to guests, plan and organise work using modern technologies, and comply with the principles of sustainability.

The tasks include developing the knowledge, skills and general competencies to perform all the tasks set out in the professional standard. There are several conceptual differences between the study content (Annex 6. 6_KV_plāni lv.pdf) and the tasks of the professional standard.

Entry requirements and centralised examination results allow students to enrol after secondary general and secondary vocational education, which may already be specialised in hospitality (SAR, p. 141). This makes a big difference in the background knowledge of the thematic field. After the vocational qualification, there is much more practice in hospitality, which is not the case for high school graduates. Unfortunately, the distance and self-directed form of study do not fully ensure skills development - creating more knowledge or using existing knowledge for those who have acquired basic hospitality skills. It cannot be assumed that the study programme is chosen by all those already working in the industry in this field but have no education, as there is no such requirement for admission - to be employed. Inevitably, this is a weakness in implementing the study programme, which prevents a secondary school graduate with this form of study and no practical work experience from acquiring the practical competencies required by the occupational standard. According to the student interview, being physically present at the university during the first year of studies is not required, preventing the use of the specific resources available (library, service simulation rooms, etc.).

The educational requirements for this type of full-time study programme are two to three years. The distance and largely self-directed (flexible study time) form of study is an attractive model for deciding to study. However, it also reduces the time available for study (contact hours, individual study time and tutorials) and simplifies study methods (mostly all individual written work). Foreign language teaching is also not the most efficient method (based on expert interviews with students). There is a lack of regular daily coordinating communication and feedback from the TU to motivate during the long study period to discipline to study actively. The choice of internship is also more formal. The very poor graduation figures show that this is a complex study process: no more than one graduate per year has graduated from the study programme since 2018 (SAR, pp. 143-144).

According to the plan for the first year of study (Annex 6_KV_plāni lv.pdf), 53 credits of study courses should be completed, corresponding to 2385 academic hours (or 1590 astronomic hours = 199 working days per year) of student workload. This is a hefty workload, given that many students work in parallel. When describing their study load during the interview, the students could not confirm that it was even close to this amount.

This means the study programme looks much closer to the profession's standard and the sector's needs on paper than in reality. The above considerations are certainly part of why there is such a difference between the number of entrants and successful graduates.

Instead of the Moodle system, the interviewee uses the BATIS system (up to the lecturer), which creates mixed service design and technological barriers to fully understanding the platform's processes, with insufficient design and some functionality gaps.

The organisational process of studying has poor supportive communication, and distance learners feel abandoned in their environment. There is a lack of social support, group activities, on-site familiarisation weeks, and practical study excursions.

2.1.3. The adjustments made to the study programme parameters in evaluating the field of study have been analysed, discussed, and should be supported. As a result of the discussions on the occupational map during the meetings of the Sectoral Expert Council of the Employers' Confederation of Latvia between 2020 and 2021, a decision on the occupational map was taken based on the needs of the sector and the existing structure of the industry, and participation in the development of new occupational standards was implemented (SAR, p. 138) - this is a strategic step and impact to the industry. Changes are being made to the study programme to encounter the observed negative dynamics over the past ten years (SAR, p. 144) and overcome the most critical challenge in the study programme - the critically low number of graduates. More important than the proposed changes in the study content is a significant revision of the study delivery format, which includes much more interactivity with students, more contact hours, a mandatory familiarisation week at the start of studies, more individual counselling time, organisational communication support, more extensive feedback on each homework assignment, etc. A competent Director of Studies is hopeful that such changes can be implemented, as her responsibility is to advise on current courses of study and the performance indicators to be achieved - how many skilled people the sector will have upon successful completion of studies.

2.1.4. Although the need for such a professional qualification is economically justified in the hospitality sector, the dynamics of student numbers (SAR, pp. 143-144) are very critical. In 2023, 8 students were enrolled (representing half of the total number of students in the study programme), and two students graduated. In the previous four years, there was only one graduate each time. This forces TU to look for more efficient ways to provide study content to small groups to save costs. The result is a remote, self-directed study with very flexible study times. Still, in this way, students do not even get to know others studying on the programme, study methods are simplified to the maximum, and the expected study load to fully acquire the knowledge, skills, and general competencies required by the professional standard still needs to be achieved (and in reality, it falls far short of what was planned). For those students who successfully complete their studies, there is no doubt that their employment in the professional sector is almost guaranteed. Their motivation to continue their studies in the next level is justified, which creates opportunities for a greater variety of professional tasks, a higher prestige for the profession and a higher income.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The study programme offers a highly flexible and industry-relevant education, providing skilled labour opportunities, recognised leadership, and the option for graduates to advance directly into the third year of a related bachelor's degree.

The current study programme faces significant challenges in maintaining consistent educational quality due to gaps in differences in foundational knowledge among students, insufficient professional skill development in a distance learning format, and lack of practical, hands-on experiences. Poor communication, inadequate support for distance learners, inconsistent use of digital learning platforms, and a lack of individualised feedback contribute to high dropout rates and a significant disparity between enrolment and successful graduation numbers.

Overall, there is a well-developed study programme with good content and a professional standard, with tempting arguments for choosing to study it. However, there is a big gap between its practical implementation and the fact that it is not actually implemented to the extent of the required student workload. The knowledge, skills and developed professional competencies acquired during studies organised like this do not meet the objectives of the field of study and the study programme.

Strengths:

- (1) Industry demand for skilled labour in this sector.
- (2) Opportunity for successful graduates to continue their undergraduate studies by progressing to the third year of a relevant bachelor's degree study programme.
- (3) An industry-recognised and competent study programme director.
- (4) The very high flexibility offered to combine study with work in the form of self-directed distance learning.

Weaknesses:

- (1) The wide gaps in basic knowledge and skills created by the possibility of admission after general or vocational secondary education.
- (2) The distance learning and self-directed study format do not fully ensure professional skills development, simplified study methods, and on-site TU learning resources are mostly unused.
- (3) The time spent studying (including contact hours, individual study time and tutorials) does not correspond to the expected study workload.
- (4) The organisational process of studying has poor supportive communication, and distance learners feel abandoned in their environment. There is a lack of social support, group activities, on-site familiarisation weeks, and practical study excursions.
- (5) There is a large difference between the number of entrants and the number of successful graduates, and there are very high drop-out rates.
- (6) Not enough feedback on the work done and awareness among lecturers of the need for extended and individualised commentary that complements the numerical grade and can help the student grow.
- (7) Instead of Moodle, the expert interviewee uses BATIS. If different lecturers use different platforms, this leads to different service designs and technological barriers to fully understanding the processes taking place on the platform, with insufficient design and some functionality gaps.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The goal of the first level (short-cycle) professional higher education study programme, Hotel Service Organizer is to train hospitality industry professionals for careers in hotels and similar companies by teaching them the hotel organisation and provision of services. The study programme leads to the 5th professional qualification level and the qualification of Hotel Services Organizer. The

study programme is completed over 2 years and four months through part-time distance learning. The study programme corresponds to the state education standards (SAR, Annex 3, Compliance of the short cycle professional study programme Hotel Services Organizer with the State Education Standard

(<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/342818-noteikumi-par-valstsprofesionalas-augstakas-izglitibas-standartu>). The study programme also corresponds to the professional standard (SAR, Annex 4, Compliance of the Study programme Hotel Services Organizer with the professional standard; <https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-217.pdf>).

It was explained to the experts by the study programme management that the study programme is primarily intended for those already employed in the hotel industry who do not have a suitable education and would like to acquire it and thus gain opportunities for possible further education. Students enrolled in this study programme can continue their studies in the first-cycle professional study programme Tourism and Hospitality Management starting from the third year, advancing their qualification to Tourism Services Manager.

The study programme's code 41811 corresponds to the programme and its specific parameters. Students develop the skills and competencies required for the qualification of Hotel Service Organizer in alignment with the programme's objectives, tasks, and expected outcomes. Information on the programme is available on the website (<https://www.turiba.lv/lv/uznemsana/>).

The study programme was updated and modernised in 2022 to align with the new professional standard for Hotel Service Organizers. The aims and objectives of the study courses within the study programme are aligned with the overall aims and objectives of the study programme. Representatives of the industry confirmed that such a study programme is needed and that it meets the needs of the labour market.

In the first year, students acquire an understanding of the tourism and hospitality industry and customer service with study courses such as Microeconomics, Tourism and Hospitality, and Customer Service. Other courses in the first year include legal, digital, and communication competencies, such as information technology, business process regulations, and professional terminology courses. During the 2nd semester, they listen to the study courses Organization of the Work of the Hotel Services, Civil and Environmental Defence, Introduction to Research Methods, and Marketing and Hospitality Business. Inside Part B, students can choose limited elective courses, Catering organisation and service and Business etiquette and Communication (SAR, Annex 5, Study course map of short cycle professional study programme Hotel Services Organizer).

In the second year of study, they learn the organisation of hotel departments, maintaining high-quality customer service, and organising and selling services, including courses like Digital Marketing and Service Sales, Management of Sustainable Organizations and Hospitality Business, Hotel Management Information Systems, Accounting and Taxes, as well as limited elective Part B study courses. These provide opportunities to gain knowledge in hotel service business organisation through the study course Meetings and Conferences, to understand regional hotel operations through Rural Tourism course, or to develop essential workplace communication and etiquette skills, particularly for the hospitality sector with Business Etiquette and Communication (SAR, Annex 5, Study course map of short cycle professional study programme Hotel Services Organizer; SAR, Annex 6, Plan for the short cycle professional study programme Hotel Services Organizer).

Unlike the study programme, the professional standard emphasises intercultural communication, fluency in foreign languages, sales communication, customer psychology and service quality. These areas are integrated into more general courses of study with different titles. However, some of the topics may be neglected in very self-directed studies, such as distance learning with some specific homework forming the central part of the studies together with a final examination. Part B of the study program includes "Business Etiquette and Communication" and "Social Psychology" as limited elective courses - both of which, however, are part of the minimum requirements of the professional standard. Part A includes "Management of sustainable organisation". However, organisation

management as a discipline is not appropriate for this level of qualification (but certainly fits within the sustainable practices in an organisation). The study programme includes research methods not directly required by the professional standard but can undoubtedly be used. The differences occur partly as the diploma entitles the holder to continue the student's education in the next level study programme, "Tourism and Hospitality Management", in the third year of study by transferring the credits acquired.

Before finishing the study programme, students must develop, present, and defend a qualification paper as a State examination. An internship is scheduled at the end of the first year of the study programme.

The content of the study courses is interconnected and complementary, and it meets the needs of the industry, labour market and scientific trends.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. Studies are offered in one form, as part-time distance learning, which meets the expectations of students enrolling in this study programme. Distance learners meet the study programme's objectives through self-study and distance learning materials. However, studying time (including contact hours, individual study time and tutorials) does not correspond to the expected study workload. Professors explained that students enjoy watching the videos, even when they are shorter than the entire lecture. Students expressed satisfaction with both the materials provided in the Moodle e-classroom and the teaching methods used. Using different platforms leads to different service designs and technological barriers to fully understanding the processes taking place on the platform. Each study course includes regular assessments using various methods (SAR, Annex 7, Study course descriptions of short cycle professional study programme Hotel Services Organizer). Combined assessment techniques are employed to evaluate students' knowledge and skills suited to the distance learning format.

Lecturers adopt appropriate teaching methods according to the course and regularly evaluate and refine their teaching methods, providing necessary guidance and support. To communicate more efficiently, students can consult or inquire about lecturers via email. After the assessment, lecturers offer detailed feedback, explaining their evaluations and providing constructive feedback. The methods used in distance learning are usual for this type of study; they use an e-classroom, lectures and short videos. Students didn't have complaints about the distance teaching; they agreed it is consistent, but sometimes the evaluation process is not comprehensive enough. Another complaint about the lack of connection to the physical resources available on-site at TU has been heard. Experts are still convinced that the study process is largely student-centered.

2.2.4. To help students build skills and competencies, the study programme includes two internships with 24 CP: 6 CP in the first year and 18 CP in the second year as part of the pre-qualification internship. Such an arrangement complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. The first internship focuses on applying knowledge from study courses like Customer Service, Tourism and Hospitality, and Organization of Work in Hotel Services, helping students develop professional competencies in the tourism industry. The second-year internship is designed to enhance professional skills, strengthen research abilities, and gather the necessary materials to build the qualification thesis. The work completed during the internship is documented in an internship report (SAR, Annex 8, Description of the organisation of the traineeship of the students).

Internships are organised through a tripartite agreement between TU, the student, and the internship provider (SAR, Annex 8, Practice Regulations). In 2023, a partnership was established with the Mogotel hotel network, offering students internship opportunities at Mogotel hotels in Latvia. Ongoing internship opportunities are communicated via the internal information system BATIS. Additionally, on 7 March 2024, TU's Career Center, in collaboration with the Student Self-

Government, hosted the Internship Market, an event to support students' career development by connecting them with entrepreneurs and internship opportunities.

Experts believe that the opportunities of internships are effective. Students confirmed that the tasks of internships related to learning outcomes are achievable. The practical choice of internship location lacks a reasoned discussion on the choice of sites. The internship supervisor is not fully informed about the objectives of the study programme, no recognition is given for internships where the student is already employed in the sector (according to students' interview).

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. Topics of the final thesis from previous years like Service quality of "Piejūras kempings" in Ventspils, Personnel management problems in "Hesburger Latvia Cēsis", Competition of public and private enterprises in tourism: case of the Talsi municipality, Organization of catering for children and youth in particular educational institutions of Kurzeme region, Hotel Monika Centrum Hotels cooperation of hotel services in assuring quality operations, Work- related risk factors in the catering company "Gan Bei" are relevant to the study field, they correspond to the study programme goals and planned competences (Other Annexes, Summary of thesis topics in first cycle study programme Hotel Services Organizer). Topics are relevant to the industry and the labour market.

Students submit their proposed qualification paper topics; these topics are then reviewed about their relevance to the industry and practice, the clarity of the topic, and any potential similarities or overlap with other students' qualification paper topics.

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

The study programme equips students with elementary professional skills for the hospitality industry. Following the SAR and annexes, the study content and study course descriptions comply with national regulations. The courses are interconnected and aligned with the study programme's primary goals. The e-learning methods support the achievement of the study process objectives. Internships are closely linked to the study programme's learning outcomes, and students have the opportunity to complete their internships with a well-established hotel chain. Examples of thesis topics also show strong relevance to the study programme's field and focus.

Strengths:

(1) Implementation of the study programme is adapted to the students.

Weaknesses:

(1) Several identified gaps between the occupational standard's requirements and the actual content of the study courses (including compulsory courses in the limited elective part).

(2) The volume of contact hours (lectures and exercises) does not correspond to the complexity of the study.

(3) Occasional lack of more comprehensive feedback on the student's assignments and other work.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. TU has its own IT Department that manages the operation of the IT environment, oversees the maintenance and development of computer hardware and networks, and is responsible for maintaining and enhancing the university's local information system BATIS.

TU develops library technologies, acquires databases, and expands its collection with the latest literature. The required reading list is updated annually based on the requests of academic staff and students. The Moodle platform is utilised for part-time distance learning (e-learning).

The library operations are supported by the ALISE system: <https://w3i.turiba.lv/Alise/en/home.aspx>.

The library's collection of books is well-suited to support a successful study process for Latvian and international students. The library funds are predominantly in Latvian, Russian, English and German. Periodicals in both printed and electronic formats are available. TU subscribes to several online electronic databases, including the Academic Term Database, Latvian Statistics, Letonika, Lursoft, EBSCO database repository, Proquest Computing database, the Scopus and ScienceDirect databases. The library offers 107 workspaces including 32 computer-equipped stations, a quiet reading room and spaces designated for group work.

In the opinion of experts, the provision complies with specific features and conditions for implementing the study programme.

2.3.2. Not relevant.

2.3.3. The operations of TU are managed by the company "Biznesa augstskola Turība" Ltd, which operates independently in commercial activities. The financial resources used to implement the study programme are provided by "Biznesa augstskola Turība" Ltd and are aligned with business principles to generate profit.

Critical elements in budget planning are technology upgrades, training courses and seminars, upgrading existing study programmes, infrastructure development, scholarships and financial aid.

According to SAR p. 153, the cost per student in the study programme is EUR 1025. The most significant percentage of the expenses - academic staff salaries is 24%. Then, there are costs of academic and scientific activities (8%), other costs, including library costs (14%), costs of development, information technology, study support (17%), operating costs of the premises, overhaul of premises, daily maintenance, utility, security and technical support costs (19%).

At least ten applicants are expected to start the study programme. However, smaller groups are launched as enrollment increases, allowing the study programme to stabilise in profitability. When the number of applicants is below the threshold, the decision to proceed is made during Rector's Council meetings involving representatives from relevant departments (e.g., Finance Department, Study Department). The study programme has previously been delivered via distance learning with smaller student numbers over one year. The study programme content has been recently updated, and the expected number of applicants is anticipated to be achievable, considering Latvia's current labour market trends.

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

Resources and provision of the study programme can be rated as sufficient. Library equipment and available digital resources (e-books, databases, software) make it possible to conclude that learning resources and their availability are good. Although there is a high demand for labour in the hotel sector, interest in applying for the study programme is relatively low.

Strengths:

(1) Library resources (books, i-books, databases, periodicals) and equipment are widely available

and accessible to students.

(2) High demand for labour in the hotel sector on the job market.

Weaknesses:

(1) Low enrollment of the students in the study programme.

(2) Insufficient promotion of the study programme.

(3) No or poor use of on-site TU-based resources for distance learners.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The resources and provision for the study programme are sufficient. Please refer to the analysis in 2.3.1. and 2.3.3.above.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. Teaching staff of this study programme (primarily intended for the ones who are employed in the hotel industry but have insufficient or inappropriate education), have qualifications following requirements of the regulatory acts, so that expected learning results defined for the study courses may be achieved (Annex 5: Study course map of short cycle professional study programme "Hotel Services Organizer" and Annex 9. Information about the academic staff of study field).

Nine teaching staff members hold elected positions, while seven are guest lecturers (Annex 9—Information about the academic staff of the study field). Lecturers are mainly active in research and participate in professional development seminars (Annex 10—Biographies of the teaching staff members). Particular training relates to developing digital skills since studies are organised as part-time distance learning and require Moodle e-classroom and BATIS, and preparation of distance learning study materials (written and video format).

The high number of guest lecturers working in different institutions may negatively influence the achievement of the study programmes' goals. The number of international visiting lectures should be increased to keep the teaching process on an international level. It would also be valuable for the study programme to have international visiting lecturers on various subjects.

2.4.2. The composition of the academic staff engaged in the study programme is stable. About 30% of the teaching staff are industry professionals (SAR, p. 154) to ensure the practical components of the study programme, competitiveness in the labour market, higher income, and prestige of the profession.

All subjects of the study programme are covered. The generation change has resulted in some changes in teaching staff. One expert from the Latvian Science Council was engaged in developing the study programme.

Six members of the academic staff hold Doctoral degrees (3 Professors and 2 Associate Professors) and are involved in implementing the study programme. The employment of young lecturers may improve the implementation of the study programme and compliance with state requirements.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. As given in Annex 14. - List of the publications of the study field “Hotel and restaurant service, tourism and leisure organisation” for the last six years, lecturers have published articles, peer-reviewed publications, monographs, and conference papers. The number of publications in WoS/Scopus and by internationally highly rated publishing houses is limited—numerous publications in Latvian limit their international use. TU provided funding for publishing several scientific monographs and participating in conferences (SAR, p. 61).

To stimulate lecturers, TU has developed a procedure for financial contributions to the authors of scientific publications indexed in the scientific databases (SSCI, SCI, SCOPUS, WoS, and Engineering Village).

As indicated in SAR (p. 153) and lecturers’ CVs, 5 lecturers have five or more years of professional experience in tourism and hospitality companies (professional experience and specialisation are closely connected to hotel management, etc.). One Latvian Council of Science expert also developed the study programme.

2.4.5. Mechanisms for cooperation of the teaching staff are departmental meetings led by the Head of the department to foster dialogue between lecturers. Academic staff attend professional development seminars (Annex 10: Biographies of the teaching staff members) to jointly improve their knowledge and skills and promote mutual interaction. For example, one professor completed the seminar “Professional Development Certificate in Higher Education Didactics: Contemporary Theory and Practice” (2019), while another professor attended the seminar “Higher Education Didactics and Innovation” (2022). Also, one lecturer completed the workshops “The Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Study Process” (2023) and “How to Get Along with Generation Z Students” (2022). Teachers also consult to avoid overlapping the teaching content in the study programme or to work on curricula development and share knowledge about innovative teaching methods.

Off-site meetings, team-building events, and the Annual scientific conference at TU are also places for panel discussions, fostering cooperation and ensuring the interrelation between the study programme and study courses.

Joint publications, participation in projects, and organisation of conferences also represent the interconnection of study courses and cooperation between academic staff.

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

All teaching staff have qualifications according to the requirements and regulatory acts. The composition of the teaching staff engaged in the study programme implementation is stable. Industry professionals represent 30% of the academic staff to ensure a practical point of view and to ensure the competitiveness of students and graduates in the labour market, higher income and prestige of the profession. All subjects of the study programme are covered. Some changes in the teaching staff are a result of generational changes.

Strengths:

- (1) Qualified teaching staff.
- (2) Teaching staff who are also industry professionals.
- (3) Existing mechanisms for cooperation of the teaching staff.

Weaknesses:

- (1) The high number of non-elected lecturers working in different institutions may negatively influence the achievement of the study programme's goals.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Teaching staff have qualifications according to the requirements and regulatory acts. Please refer to the analysis in 2.4.1., 2.4.2., and 2.4.5. above.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the state standard of short-cycle professional higher education, defined in the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of June 13, 2023, No. 305, "Rules on the standard of state professional higher education". The study programme is organised following the Law on Higher Education Institutions and TU internal normative acts.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study programme partially complies with the professional standard: The professional standard of Hotel Services organiser was approved on 06.04.2022. (Annex: 4_PIELIKUMS_KV_EN.pdf). Some gaps exist between the standard's requirements and the actual content of the study courses (including the inclusion of compulsory study courses in the limited elective part). There is also a gap between the introduction of practical study content and the objectives of the curriculum - to develop the competencies required for the standard with existing study methods, not just to formally guarantee them. The requirements in the regulations and documentation are the same on paper, but from the student interviews and the amount of study content, especially in the distance learning format, it is the practical input that has these deviations from the existing text. The number of graduates is too small to claim that their competitiveness on the labour market and their qualifications fully correspond to what is said.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study courses' descriptions and materials have been prepared in Latvian, and they comply with the requirements outlined in Section 56 (1), Paragraph Two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. The descriptions of the study courses are available in English and Latvian (Annex KV_ENG.pdf).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The information in the diploma sample for completing the study programme (1_KV diploms un pielikums_ENG.pdf) is compliant.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Staff is proficient in Latvian language.(cv_eng.pdf ; 11_Apliecinajums par valsts valodas zinasanam_eng.edoc ; 9_Mācībspēku saraksts virzienam_eng.pdf).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement. (7 _Studiju_līgums_tipveida_eng.pdf).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The TU has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution in case of

closure of study programs - three study programmes in Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (ViA) (41811 Hotel services organizer, 42812 Tourism and hospitality management and 47812 Tourism strategic management) and one (42812 Event production and management) in EKA University of Applied Sciences, if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.
5_sadarbība par izglītība snodrošināšanu_eng.pdf

If such a hypothetical need arose (not used for 20+ years), the college programme would provide students with the opportunity to study as part of a bachelor's degree programme by creating an individual study plan and aligning the courses taken. There are some details missing in the agreement according Cabinet Regulation No. 795 Adopted 11 December 2018 “ Regulations Regarding Licensing of Study Programmes”
<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/303957-regulations-regarding-licensing-of-study-programmes>
(Section 13.3). The shortcoming needs to be addressed.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The TU has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's licence is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of TU and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

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The signed certificate does not contain the names of concrete study programmes to confirm that a HEI guarantees the students compensation for losses if the study programme does not get accredited or the study programme licence is withdrawn and students do not wish to continue their studies in another study programme. That should be included there according to Cabinet Regulation No. 795 Adopted 11 December 2018 “ Regulations Regarding Licensing of Study Programmes”
<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/303957-regulations-regarding-licensing-of-study-programmes>
(Section 13.4). The shortcoming needs to be addressed.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study programme partially complies with the requirements outlined in the Law on Higher

Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments. The distance learning and self-directed study format do not fully ensure professional skills development, study methods are simplified, and on-site TU learning resources are mostly unused. The time spent studying (including contact hours, individual study time, and tutorials) does not correspond to the expected students' workload. There is also a gap between the introduction of practical study content and the objectives of the curriculum - to develop the competencies required for the standard with existing study methods, not just to guarantee them formally.

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

Overall, there is a study programme with tempting arguments for studying it. However, there is a big gap between its practical implementation and the fact that it is not implemented to the extent of the required student workload. The knowledge, skills and developed professional competencies acquired during such organised studies do not meet the objectives of the field of study and the study programme. The study programme equips students with elementary professional skills for the hospitality industry. Following the SAR and annexes, the study content and study courses descriptions comply with national regulations. The courses are interconnected and aligned with the study programme's primary goals. The e-learning methods support the achievement of the study process objectives. Internships are closely linked to the study programme's learning outcomes, and students have the opportunity to complete their internships with a well-established hotel chain. Examples of thesis topics also show strong relevance to the study programme's field and focus. Resources and provision of the study programme can be rated as sufficient. Library equipment and available digital resources (e-books, databases, software) make it possible to conclude that learning resources and their availability are good. Although there is a high demand for labour in the hotel sector, interest in applying for the study programme is relatively low. All teaching staff have qualifications according to the requirements and regulatory acts. The composition of the teaching staff engaged in the study programme implementation is stable. Industry professionals represent 30% of the academic staff to ensure a practical point of view and to ensure the competitiveness of students and graduates in the labour market, as well as higher income and prestige of the profession. All subjects of the study programme are covered. Some changes in the teaching staff are a result of generational changes.

Strengths:

- (1) Industry demand for skilled labour in this sector.
- (2) Opportunity for successful graduates to continue their undergraduate studies by progressing to the third year of a relevant bachelor's degree study programme.
- (3) An industry-recognised and competent study programme director.
- (4) The very high flexibility offered to combine study with work in the form of self-directed distance learning.
- (5) Implementation of the study programme is adapted to the students.
- (6) Library items (books, i-books, databases, periodicals) and equipment are widely available and accessible to students.
- (7) High demand for labour in the hotel sector on the job market.
- (8) Qualified teaching staff.
- (9) Teaching staff who are also industry professionals.

Weaknesses:

- (1) The wide gaps in basic knowledge and skills created by the possibility of admission after general or vocational secondary education.

- (2) The distance learning and self-directed study format do not fully ensure professional skills development, study methods are simplified, and on-site TU learning resources are mostly unused. The time spent studying (including contact hours, individual study time, and tutorials) does not correspond to the expected students' workload.
- (3) The organisational process of studying has poor supportive communication, and distance learners feel abandoned in their environment. There is a lack of social support, group activities, on-site familiarisation weeks, practical study excursions, etc.
- (4) There is a significant difference between the number of entrants and the number of successful graduates, with very high drop-out numbers.
- (5) Not enough feedback on the work done and awareness among lecturers of the need for extended and individualised commentary that complements the numerical grade and can help the student grow.
- (6) The use of BATIS system instead of Moodle creates mixed service design and technological barriers to a full understanding of the platform's processes, with insufficient design and some functionality gaps.
- (7) Several identified gaps between the occupational standard's requirements and the actual content of the study courses (including compulsory study courses in the limited elective part).
- (8) Occasional lack of comprehensive feedback on student assignments and other work.
- (9) Low enrollment of the students in the study programme.

Evaluation of the study programme "Hotel Services Organizer "

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Hotel Services Organizer "

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| (1) Improve communication with students at all levels of the distance programme implementation, organise a familiarisation week, and provide opportunities to socialise with other coursemates. |
| (2) Review the operational procedures for implementing the study programme to harmonise the study load with the study programme requirements and the professional standard. There should be an increased focus on using study methods and innovative approaches to train professional skills. |
| (3) Revise admission requirements to align study options with vocational skills for post-technical or post-secondary students. |
| (4) Adapt the distance learning and self-directed study format and student workload to ensure professional skills development, study methods, and the better use of on-site TU learning resources. |
| (5) Improve the students' social support, group activities, on-site familiarisation weeks, and practical study excursions. |
| (6) Adapt the list of study courses with the occupational standard's requirements (compulsory study courses in the limited elective part). |

Long-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| (1) Find ways to leverage the students' support during studies to decrease the drop-out numbers. |
| (2) Improve feedback on the work done and lecturers' awareness of the need for extended and individualised commentary that complements the numerical grade and can help the student grow. |
| (3) Optimize the teachers' use of Moodle besides BATIS. Increase the promotion of the study programme to increase the enrollment of the students in the study programme. |

II - "Event Production and Management" ASSESSMENT

II - "Event Production and Management" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The study programme is relevant to the field of study. The professional qualification awarded is "Company Manager", which in the occupational standard provides for a broad knowledge of business and administration, including, among others, company development theories, planning of company operations, strategic planning of the company, determining the resources required to operate the company and the capacity to perform financial analysis, the main emphasis is on learning creative services in the tourism sector. Event production and management may be part of the work of an organisation (including a municipality). They may not cover in such depth all the aspects needed by the manager of the company. At the same time, such broad and thematic commercial skills training allows employees to increase their competitiveness and build their businesses in this thematic area. The scope of the events produced and managed by the company can also be broader, including cultural, business, and sports. Still, there is no contradiction here either, as events in different fields can be designed as a tool to attract tourists to a destination.

The positioning of the study programme title and the thematic difference from the first cycle professional study programme "Tourism and Hospitality Management", which leads to the professional qualification "Tourism Services Manager", gives the impression that this is a much more creative study programme. However, the professional standard requires excellent financial literacy and a comprehensive knowledge of commercial management. In the interviews with industry and graduates, it was not particularly emphasised that the programme was designed with a deeply specific business orientation; many graduates work in local government (with an emphasis on the cultural sector in local government) - cultural event organisers also have a different professional standard. Based on the industry stakeholder interviews and their observation from the bachelor thesis defence, financial literacy, which was critical in earlier years, has improved in recent years.

The overall service design of the study programme needs to be improved to make learning more self-directed and balance the study load with the objectives and overall parameters of the study programme. A digitally well-organised circulation of learning materials, well-planned contact hours and tutorials enhanced tailored feedback, and application creativity through diverse and innovative pedagogical methods to train specific professional skills in line with professional standards should be improved to excellence.

The sequence of courses is not justified in all semesters. For example, "Event Project Implementation" is only in Semester 8 as an extensive course (12 ECTS), while "Event Scripting and Directing" is a semester earlier. These courses would logically be in reverse order, as directing needs a solid framework of project implementation skills to incorporate creativity. "Event Production" as a critical study course, which coincides with the study programme title, is only 7.5 ECTS, which is ~3% of the total study volume - disproportionately low.

This study programme focuses on a professional standard that is closely linked to other related

professions in the creative industries, including the cultural management sector. However, the study programme's inclusion in the Service, Tourism and Business thematic area provides a distinct focus and competitive advantage in the labour market, making it appropriate for this field of study. A similar approach has been implemented in several other foreign universities with event management under tourism.

2.1.2. "Event Production and Management" is a first-cycle professional study programme (qualification level: LQF and EQF Level 6, and awarded professional bachelor's degree) followed by upper-secondary general education (as defined in Annex 1. "Model diploma and its annex"). The duration of full-time studies shall be four years. The last digits of the code, '812', is part of the Service sector - "Organisation of Tourism and Recreation". Titles of the awarded degree and qualification: Professional bachelor's degree in Business Administration and qualification "Company Manager". The Professional Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and the qualification "Company Manager" go beyond the study content and the title of the study programme. At the same time, the content includes study courses that develop business management competencies while maintaining the thematic area of events. It should also be noted that small businesses dominate tourism and hospitality. The field of event organisation varies, and students are often involved in organising thematic cultural events. In this context, the emphasis is more on cultural resource and crowd management and less on company management, which creates a disconnect between the study programme objectives, title, content and qualification.

In Annex 4, the "Event Production and Management" compliance with the professional standard has been augmented, emphasising thematic specialisation in tourism and event management.

The study programme's SAR (p. 85) states that the study programme's "Event Production and Management" goals and objectives fully comply with the goals and objectives defined for the study field "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organization." - See section 1.1 of this report for an assessment of the overall objectives. The goal of the study programme (Annex 1.) is to prepare versatile educated, creative, competitive organisers of business, recreational, cultural and other types of events in Latvia and the international environment, event merchants and business managers, including those elements in the study process, which promote the growth of the student's personality, develop the ability to work in a team, encourage creative expressions and develop management skills and competencies based on technologies and sustainable development. This objective (and thematic area) places more emphasis on creativity, which is not as widely demanded in the general occupational standard but is justified given the specificities of the field.

The admission requirements are appropriate to the study process. The learning outcomes are broadly aligned with the aim and qualification requirements. However, there is an allowance that the final bachelor thesis may not be directly related to event organisation (extra annex on "Summary of thesis topics in first cycle study programme "Event Production and Management"), allowing for a more general coverage of tourism. This is justified in terms of the market situation and the student competitiveness, although such an approach distances from the aim and objectives of the study programme and the sequential progression towards the qualification.

The study programme is provided in Latvian, which limits its market. Given the overall goals and positioning of the Faculty of International Tourism and its success in attracting international students, this could be developed prospectively as an English language study programme, as a joint study programme with one of the foreign partner universities. Part-time extramural studies are much more self-directed and require outstanding digitally well-organised study materials, well-planned contact hours and tutorials, extended customised feedback, and creativity in using diverse and innovative pedagogical methods to train specific skills, not just knowledge. According to the interviews of alumni and students, student workload indicates a smaller amount than planned and some areas for improvement in all study processes (irregular feedback, lack of motivation for studies during the whole study process, need for a more developed digital platform).

2.1.3. The changes affected the title of the study programme (previously “Management of Business and Recreational Events” and its content, which the Study Accreditation Commission accepted in August 2018 (SAR, p. 84). The changes are based mainly on adapting to the market situation and the marketing aspects of attracting students (leading to an increase in part-time study programmes, which are often chosen by those already working in the sector to reinforce their practical knowledge with theory, broadening their professional competences) according to SAR, p. 84. Still, they also include less self-motivated students who need the right diplomas and qualifications to be stable in their existing jobs (based on the interview with the guest lecturer). The literal translation of the programme title into English is somewhat confusing. It suggests another occupational standard, Event Producer, which is narrower than the study programme as a whole. However, a fuller picture emerges from the full content of the study programme (Annex 6) and its alignment with the occupational standard (Annex 4).

2.1.4. While changes in the name, positioning and partly the content of the study programme (2018; SAR 3.1.1, p. 84) significantly increased student recruitment compared to the pre-2018 period (The highest intake rate was achieved in 2021 when 34 students were enrolled (SAR, p. 84)), the number of graduates remains low and up to three times less than the number enrolled. Relevant changes have been made in some study courses (e.g. “Management” has been replaced by “Sustainable Organisation Management”, SAR, p. 84), and existing study courses have been upgraded.

Capital city Riga, as the TU study venue, is an important cultural, tourism and business centre in Europe, which envisions Riga as a place for business, recreational and business events by organising events of various scales in the MICE sector. It strengthens the links with the industry and provides opportunities for case studies, guest lectures, study tours, etc. Only the part-time, remote format of the studies does not allow to use it fully. One of the critical benefits recognised by both graduates and industry (based on interviews) is the professional networking that brings students together with industry practitioners, competent lecturers and other fellow students.

According to the 2023 year alumni survey (SAR, p. 87), 67% of the surveyed graduates of the “Event Production and Management” study programme stated that they had already been working during their studies at TU. This is a modern reality which, on the one hand, has the advantage of better linking practical everyday activities with more comprehensive new knowledge, but on the other hand, has the negative effect of reducing study loads due to capacity problems and occupancy (based on interviews with students, graduates and employers).

The relevance of the content, the form of delivery, and the overall cost of implementing the study programme in the context of demand and the size of study groups make an economic case for its existence (extra Annex “Costs per student of the first cycle study programme “Event Production and Management”). The proportion of successful graduates should be increased.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The study programme is relevant to the field of study. The content of the study programme is tailored to the needs of the sector. However, the title refers to a different profession (event production) and is not as broad as the corresponding occupational standard. The study programme is in Latvian, and its potential is not fully exploited, as it would fit in the Faculty of International Tourism as a broader combined study programme for an international audience. The professional standard requires very good financial literacy and comprehensive knowledge of commercial management, balanced with an emphasis on creativity drawn from the study programme.

Strengths:

- (1) The capital city of Riga, as a TU study location, is an important cultural, tourism, and business centre in Europe. Its growing MICE sector and diverse events provide opportunities to integrate the sector into the study process.
- (2) Many students already working in the sector who study remotely, combining it with their professional work, benefit by better linking their daily practical activities with more comprehensive new knowledge.
- (3) One key benefit is the professional networking that brings students together with industry practitioners, competent lecturers, and other fellow students.

Weaknesses:

- (1) The study programme is provided in Latvian, which limits its market and exportability.
- (2) The part-time form of study does not provide full opportunities to take advantage of Riga as a central location for the strategic integration of the MICE sector in various stages of the study process (especially for students from outside the Riga agglomeration).
- (3) Allowance for the fact that the final bachelor thesis may not be directly related to event organisation but cover the field of tourism more generally, moving away from the aim and objectives of the study programme and the sequential progression towards the fulfilment of the qualification requirements.
- (4) Some students already working in the sector, who study remotely in conjunction with their professional work, face capacity problems. Due to their busy schedules, they spend less time studying and do not maintain the same level of motivation throughout their studies.
- (5) Student drop-out rate is rather high.
- (6) Disconnect between the objectives, title, content and qualification of the study programme (company manager).
- (7) The course structure lacks logical sequencing at certain parts and proper emphasis, with key subjects either taught in an ineffective order or given disproportionately low credit allocations, undermining the coherence and focus of the study programme.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. Study programme Event Production and Management (42812) is a professional bachelor study programme aimed at preparing well-rounded, knowledgeable, creative, and competitive professionals capable of organising business, recreational, cultural, and other types of events both in Latvia and the international environment, as well as event entrepreneurs and business managers.

The code 42812 of the study programme corresponds to its structure and parameters (SAR, p. 85). The study programme's goals and objectives align with those established for the field of study. The study course outcomes, aims, and objectives align with the field and study programme objectives. The overarching aim of the field - developing general professional competencies in event management as part of the service industry - is achieved through study courses such as Sustainable Organization Management, Business Administration, Macroeconomics, Business Event Organization, and Hospitality and Customer Service. Additionally, professional elective courses are offered to deepen expertise in event production as a form of entrepreneurship, consistent with the study field's goals and the study programme's purpose. The study programme's aim is closely linked to the outcomes, aims, and objectives of the study courses, which are organised into thematic areas that cover entrepreneurship in the service sector, the business environment and its influencing factors, and personal growth and skills development.

The content of the study programme is updated yearly. The Faculty Council reviews the study programme's content, lecturers-industry professionals deliver the study courses, and lecturers collaborate to develop and update study course descriptions, ensuring the curriculum's balance and

avoiding content overlapping. In line with the study programme's aim, the curriculum includes study courses that develop general competencies in competitive business (such as Macroeconomics, Management of Sustainable Organization, International Project Management, and Tourism Economics and Globalization). Additionally, specialised study courses in event production focus on equipping students with the knowledge and skills required for event planning, management, and production (SAR, Annex 7, PV_ENG.pdf).

In the first year, the study programme offers study courses that provide a professional orientation to the specifics of the field. The second year includes courses that focus on developing skills for independent work, understanding the profitability of event organisation, team building, and product sales. In the third year, the study courses emphasise positioning events as service products in the market and gaining knowledge in market research and other aspects of event production within the service sector. In the fourth year, courses are designed to equip graduates with the ability to assess factors influencing event creation and the external environment of the entire industry. Internships are scheduled at the end of each study year (SAR, Annex 6, Study programme plan; SAR, Annex 8. Description of the organisation of the traineeship internship of the students). The study programme is interconnected horizontally and vertically (SAR, Annex 5, Mapping of the study programme).

Some things in the study programme could be improved, such as the fact that the sequence of courses is not justified in all semesters. For example, "Event Project Implementation" is only in Semester 8 as an extensive course (12 ECTS), while "Event Scripting and Directing" is a semester earlier. These courses would logically be in reverse order, as directing needs a solid framework of project implementation skills to incorporate creativity. "Event Production" as a critical study course, which coincides with the study program title, is only 7.5 ECTS, which is ~3% of the total study volume - disproportionately low.

The State examination, which includes developing the diploma paper, is scheduled at the end of the studies. Diploma paper topics are reviewed during a departmental meeting involving the academic staff, including professionals who have contributed to implementing the study programme. By TU's Regulations on Final Examinations, industry representatives are invited to serve on the diploma paper presentation/defence committees, offering feedback on the relevance and current significance of the topics.

Employers mentioned the opportunity for the study programme to specialise in the management of sports events.

The content of the study programme complies with the national education standard set out in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 305 of 13 June 2023 Regulations on the State Standard for Vocational Higher Education (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/342818-noteikumi-par-valsts-profesionalasaugstakas-izglitibas-standartu>) and with the professional standard (<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-115.pdf>).

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. Within the study programme, they are using established study methods: lectures, seminars, discussions, practical classes, use of online resources, study of scientific literature, applied games, individual and group consultations, practice, study tours, case studies, development of students' independent practical work, presentations (SAR, Annex 7. Study course descriptions of first cycle professional study programme Event Production and Management). Also, Webex is used by guest lecturers (SAR, p. 92). The same study methods are being used in similar study programmes across the EU; they are well-proven and help to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of this particular study programme and study courses.

Some possibilities for improving the part-time form of study exist in providing the given available materials and the opportunities to integrate the MICE sector in Riga inside the various stages of the

study process for these students.

Interviewed students confirmed that learning and teaching are student-centred. Professors encourage individual and team learning, provide real-time evaluations of partial and final assignments, and are available for additional explanation during and after lectures, on site and remotely. Students specifically mentioned their satisfaction with visiting different business venues and events, where they could get acquainted with the vast events industry-connected products and services.

Part-time studies demand a high level of self-direction, necessitating exceptionally well-organized digital study materials, strategically planned contact hours, personalised feedback, and innovative pedagogical methods to develop specific skills effectively. To enhance the quality and balance of learning with the programme's objectives, the service design must be refined, focusing on improved digital organisation of learning resources, better-planned interactions, tailored feedback, and creative, diverse teaching methods aligned with professional standards.

2.2.4. The study programme includes four internships totalling a joint amount of 39 CP: four weeks in the first and second year, six weeks in the third and 12 weeks in the fourth year of studies (SAR, p. 94; SAR, Annex 8, Practice Regulations). The coordinator of international internships works continuously to assist students in securing internships abroad, handling necessary documentation, and overseeing partnerships with internship providers. Internships are also available through Latvian companies and organisations. When evaluating a company's suitability as an internship provider, students are informed about the opportunities available at that company. Information on current internship opportunities is regularly updated on the internal BATIS system, and students confirmed it. In collaboration with the Student Self-government, TU's Career Centre organises the Internship Market event (SAR, p. 94). All these activities help students to find proper internship placement, and they agree that the process runs smoothly and efficiently.

The tasks of internship students have to attend correspond to the planned learning outcomes. For example, in Practicum 1 (Annex Study course descriptions, p. 152): Evaluate the use of nature, rural or urban environment in the organisation of various events; Assess the company's cooperation with the local government and residents; Evaluate the positive aspects of the company's operation and potential problem areas. The same goes for Practicum 2 (Annex Study course descriptions, p. 155): Participate in the planning, preparation, implementation and evaluation of various sports, active tourism and cultural events; Serve customers and be able to assess their wishes and needs; Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the practice enterprise. Some examples from Practicum 3 (Annex Study course descriptions, p. 158): Visit five different events - of business, business and cultural events, etc. and evaluate them according to the event evaluation criteria; Visit five different business and cultural events and evaluate them according to the evaluation criteria of the event; Get to know human resources management and its methods in the company. The study programme is implemented only in Latvian.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. Students can freely choose the topics they want to research for their final theses. They are checked at the department meetings, and if they are topical, current, and correspond to the study programme, they are approved. From the available list (SAR, p.95: Other annexes: Summary of thesis topics in first cycle study programme Event Production and Management) of final thesis topics, it is visible they do correspond to the study programme, e.g., The use of digital tools and forms in the Latvian event industry; Criteria for selecting non-traditional venues for business events; Means of attracting and retaining participant attention in online events in Latvia; etc. (Other annexes: PVL tēmas. pdf).

The topics of students' final papers align with the study programme's goals. They can be categorised

into three thematic groups: the creation of new products or a significant improvement of existing products, the use of digital technologies in event production, and various issues related to the production and hosting of events (SAR, pp. 95-96). Industry representatives also test the relevance of final thesis topics at thesis defence events.

Topics are relevant to the industry and the labour market broadly, but in some cases they are completely unrelated to the organisation of events, which is a redirection from the objectives of the study programme and professional qualification. Event production is one of the service sector business activities where, alongside general business knowledge, skills and competences, the knowledge and skills necessary for the management of service sector enterprises are acquired in depth, with a particular focus on the event sector.

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

Industry representatives and other stakeholders confirmed the need for such a study programme and the great expansion of events tourism in Europe. The content of the study programme is well thought out, connected, and updated to meet the needs of the industry. The content complies with the state education standard and the appropriate professional standard. Study methods are diverse across the curriculum due to different study courses, enabling student-centred teaching and allowing the achievement of study programme goals. Students get enough information and opportunities to realise the planned internships. These topics are relevant and correspond to the study programme.

Strengths:

- (1) The growth of the event industry in Latvia and the EU provides wide employment opportunities for study programme graduates.
- (2) The content of the study programme and its implementation methods are laudable for full-time students.
- (3) Informing students about internship opportunities is commendable.

Weaknesses:

- (1) The sequence of courses in semesters could be rethought.
- (2) Part-time learning students have slightly worse chances of taking advantage of the available opportunities for practical training than their full-time study colleagues.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. Lecture halls, conference rooms, and computer labs are sufficiently equipped. Students have full access to a modern library, a large reading room, computer classes, and workplaces. Study premises are equipped with high-quality visual aids, such as whiteboards, screens, multimedia projectors, and audio-video systems.

TU provides a well-equipped learning space known as the "Event Laboratory," which is designed and furnished with modern equipment. This space is used for lectures, guest lectures, and meetings with

professionals from the event industry. Both event industry students and the University's Development Department utilise this adaptable space for filming promotional materials and conducting practical activities as part of the study process. Functioning conference halls are also available and utilized for developing practical skills in organising business events and conferences (SAR, p. 98). Additionally, during the study process, the "Silent Reading Room" auditorium, a closed-type space, is available and can be adapted to simulate actual event setups.

According to SAR, p. 97, the TU IT Department manages the IT environment. It oversees the maintenance and development of computer hardware and the network and the operation and improvement of the TU information system BATIS. The Moodle environment is used for part-time distance learning (e-learning). Library work is provided by ALISE: <https://w3i.turiba.lv/Alise/en/home.aspx>.

TU invests annually, proportionally to the growth in student numbers, in the development of library technologies, the acquisition of databases, and the addition of the latest literature to its collection. The list of required reading materials is updated annually based on the requests of teaching staff and students. The library offers free access to the latest scientific literature on event production, various types of events, innovation and risk management in event production (SAR, p. 97).

The above-mentioned kinds of resource provision create prerequisites for achieving the learning outcomes and can ensure a high-quality study process.

2.3.2. Not relevant.

2.3.3. The operations of TU are managed by the company "Biznesa augstskola Turība" Ltd, which operates independently in commercial activities. The financial resources used to implement the study programme are provided by "Biznesa augstskola Turība" Ltd and are aligned with business principles to generate profit.

Critical elements in budget planning are technology upgrades, training courses and seminars, upgrading existing programmes, infrastructure development, scholarships and financial aid.

According to SAR p. 99, the cost for each student enrolled in the full-time first-cycle study programme is EUR 1,608, and for part-time studies, EUR 1,382. The most significant portion of the costs - 25% is made up of salaries for academic staff. The other significant costs are other costs of educational and scientific activities (9%), other study costs, including library costs (13%), costs of development, information technology, study support (18%), operating costs of the premises, overhaul of premises, daily maintenance, utility, security and technical support costs (15%).

Ten students are required to launch a group. However, it is acceptable to launch a group with fewer applicants in the study programme (SAR, p. 99). The profitability of the study programme and its impact on the overall profitability of the study field are analysed. The effect on the university's overall budget if the group is opened with fewer students is also assessed.

The study field "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organization", where the programme "Event Production and Management" is implemented, is essential in business and content, providing a comprehensive tourism industry education for various students. Therefore, part-time studies also allow for the opening of smaller-sized groups. The viability of covering expenses with the available resources is evaluated. The management of TU makes the final decision on whether to open a group, considering financial considerations against academic quality and long-term strategic goals to ensure the sustainability of the study programme. According to SAR, p. 100, if TU revenue and profits are adequate to support the development of the study programme, it is strategically significant, even if it is initially not profitable.

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

The study programme's financial and study resources and provision can be rated as sufficient.

Library equipment and available digital resources (e-books, databases, software) make it possible to conclude that learning resources and their availability are appropriate. Lecture halls, rooms, computer labs and specially equipped learning spaces provide conducting practical activities as part of the study process.

Strengths:

- (1) Specially equipped learning rooms and spaces help conduct practical activities during the study process.
- (2) The launch of groups with a smaller number of participants is acceptable.

Weaknesses:

- (1) The development of the study programme is supported by the overall revenue and profit of TU.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, including library, IT, and financial provision, is sufficient for implementing the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The teaching staff of this study programme (primarily intended to answer the needs of raising the event industry in Europe and broader) have qualifications by requirements of the regulatory acts (Annex 9. Information about the academic staff of study field). In the implementation of this study programme, 37 lecturers are engaged, while 17 hold elected academic positions: 5 professors, 3 associate professors, 3 docents/associate professors, and 6 lecturers (SAR, p. 101). There is a high level of guest lecturers (20) who mainly come from the industry, which may negatively affect the learning outcomes due to limitations in their synergy with the full-time lecturers.

Thirteen lecturers hold doctoral degrees and are engaged in implementing the study programme, and three lecturers are postgraduate students. Compared to 2018, 3 lecturers in the study programme have acquired a doctoral degree. Thus, the raising of the qualifications of the academic staff is noticeable.

Five lecturers engaged in implementing the study programme hold the status of an expert of the Scientific Council of Latvia.

Some courses and training offered (Annex 10: Biographies of the teaching staff members) have improved the intangible skills of the academic staff (digital and leadership competencies). These new competencies may be useful tools for further developing the study field.

Although the study programme is implemented in the Latvian language, the number of international visiting lecturers should be increased. In 2022/23, there were 3 incoming teachers mobility within the study field, the same as in 2018/2019. In 2019/2020 and 2020/21, there were no incoming teaching mobilities within the study field (Annex 18: Statistics about Incoming and Outgoing mobility of lecturers of study field). It would also benefit the study programme to have international visiting lecturers on various subjects.

2.4.2. The composition of the academic staff engaged in the study programme is stable. Overall,

30% of the academic staff are professionals within the industry, providing students with practical experience-based opinions apart from theoretical knowledge. Such a composition of the academic staff can be considered appropriate for completing the objectives of the study programme.

As clarified during the interviews with teaching staff and students during the assessment visit, students may evaluate lecturers using an anonymous survey after passing the exam. Students are expected to show their opinions about the teaching staff openly, indicating positive and negative features (SAR, p. 102)

Peer observation of classes is a practice so that teachers can improve their expertise and ensure the quality of the study programme by observing and sharing innovative ideas and teaching techniques (SAR, p. 102).

Off-site meetings, team-building events, and the Annual scientific conference at TU are also places for panel discussions, fostering cooperation and ensuring the interrelation between the study programme and study courses. Teachers also consult with each other to avoid overlapping the teaching content in the study programme, work on curricula development, and share knowledge about innovative teaching methods.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. The lecturers are qualified teaching staff involved in scientific research publishing. They have published articles, peer-reviewed publications, monographs, and conference papers. There have been 123 participation times in conferences and 112 participation times in projects (within the study field). Papers related to the core topics in tourism and hospitality are underrepresented. Also, the number of papers related to event management is quite limited.

The number of publications in WoS/Scopus and by internationally high-rated publishing houses is limited. Some scientific contributions are based on academic involvement in international cooperation, but TU generally underuses international networks and partnerships for scientific research and publishing.

The professional seminars attended by teaching staff are context-specific, with particular attention to digital skills (for preparing video lectures) and communication. Several invited lecturers are industry experts (some of them have PhD). Five lecturers of the study programme have five or more years of professional experience in tourism and hospitality companies or are engaged in tourism and hospitality management and business.

2.4.5. Departmental meetings led by the Department head are mechanisms for mutual cooperation among the teaching staff. Teaching staff from different faculties are engaged in the study process, which leads to cooperation among them. Teachers also communicate and evaluate teaching content to avoid overlapping.

As explained during the assessment visit, teaching staff of thematically related study courses cooperate in curriculum development.

The interconnection of study courses within the study programme is demonstrated (SAR, p. 104). Cooperation between the academic staff and interconnection of study courses are also represented in joint publications (Annex 14: List of the publications of the study field "Hotel and restaurant service, tourism and leisure organisation" for the last six years), joint participation in projects and joint organisation of conferences.

The annual scientific conference at TU also includes panel discussions, strengthening cooperation, and ensuring the interrelation between the study programme and study courses.

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

Teaching staff qualifications comply with the state requirements and with the subjects taught in the

study programme. The composition of the teaching staff is acceptable for fulfilling the objectives of the study programme. Training/courses are available to improve the qualifications of the teaching staff (intangible and language skills). Papers related to the core topics in tourism and hospitality are underrepresented, while the number of event management papers is limited. A sufficient number of lecturers in the study programme have professional experience in tourism and hospitality companies or are engaged in tourism and hospitality management.

The academic staff cooperation is well arranged and appears not only in the study process but also in joint research and publications,

Strengths:

- (1) Qualified academic staff.
- (2) Effective cooperation of the academic staff.

Weaknesses:

- (1) Small number of international visiting lecturers.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Teaching staff qualifications comply with the state requirements and with the subjects taught in the study programme.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The programme complies with the state education standard for the first cycle study programme, "Regulations on the State Standard for Professional Higher Education", and it is organised following the Law on Higher Education Institutions and TU's internal normative acts.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme is compliant with the professional standards of the Company manager.
(Annex: 4_PV prof.standarts_eng.pdf)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The programme is provided in Latvian, but study course descriptions are also prepared in English; they comply with the requirements outlined in Section 561, Paragraph Two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. (Annex 7. Study course descriptions of first-cycle professional study programme “Event Production and Management”)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

It complies with the procedure by which state-recognised higher education documents are issued. (Annex: PV diploms un pielikums eng.pdf)

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Teaching staff members are proficient in the Latvian language.

(cv_eng.pdf ; 11_Apliecinajums par valsts valodas zinasanam_eng.edoc ; 9_Mācībspēku saraksts virzienam_eng.pdf).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

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

the study agreement. (7 _Studiju_ligums_tipveida_eng.pdf)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The TU has confirmed that students (42812 Event production and management) will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution—in the relevant program of EKA University of Applied Sciences—if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

5_sadarbība_par_izglītība_snodrošināšanu_eng.pdf

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The TU has confirmed that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's licence is revoked due to the TU's actions (actions or omissions) and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme. CONFIRMATION Compensation guarantee for students.docx

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the requirements outlined in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

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

The content of a study programme delivered as part-time does not benefit as much from Riga as the location of the study programme and Riga as the venue for various public events as it would if the study programme were delivered as a full-time face-to-face programme. However, the market aspect has to be taken into account as most of the students are employed in the sector and this is the most suitable form of study for them, which makes it easier to recruit study groups.

The professional standard requires very good financial literacy and comprehensive knowledge of commercial management, balanced with an emphasis on creativity drawn from the study

programme. Changes to the study programme were made in 2018, primarily based on adapting to the market situation and the marketing aspects of attracting students. These changes significantly increased student recruitment compared to the pre-2018 period. Industry representatives and other stakeholders confirmed the need for such a study programme and emphasised the significant expansion of events tourism in Europe. The content of the study programme is well thought out, connected, and updated to meet the needs of the industry. The content complies with the state education standard and the appropriate professional standard. Study methods are diverse across the curriculum due to different courses, enabling student-centred teaching and allowing the achievement of study programme goals. Students get enough information and possibilities to realise the planned internships. These topics are relevant and correspond to the study programme. The study programme's financial and study resources and provision can be rated as sufficient. Library equipment and available digital resources make it possible to conclude that learning resources and their availability are appropriate. Lecture halls, rooms, computer labs and specially equipped learning spaces provide conducting practical activities as part of the study process. Teaching staff qualifications comply with the state requirements and with the subjects taught in the study programme. The teaching staff is qualified for fulfilling the objectives of the study programme. Training/courses are available to improve the qualifications of the teaching staff (intangible and language skills).

Strengths:

- (1) The capital city of Riga, as a TU study location, is an important cultural, tourism, and business centre in Europe. Its growing MICE sector and diverse events provide opportunities to integrate the sector into the study process.
- (2) Many students already working in the sector who study remotely, combining it with their professional work, benefit by better linking their daily practical activities with more comprehensive new knowledge.
- (3) One key benefit is the professional networking that brings students together with industry practitioners, competent lecturers, and other fellow students.
- (4) The growth of the event industry in Latvia and the EU provides wide employment opportunities for study programme graduates.
- (5) Specially equipped learning rooms and spaces help conduct practical activities during the study process.
- (6) Qualified academic staff.
- (7) Effective cooperation of the academic staff.

Weaknesses:

- (1) The study programme is provided in Latvian, which limits its market and exportability.
- (2) The part-time form of study does not fully allow students to take advantage of Riga's central location for the strategic integration of the MICE sector in various stages of the study process.
- (3) Allowing the fact that the final bachelor thesis may not be directly related to event organisation but cover the field of tourism more generally, moving away from the aim and objectives of the study programme and the sequential progression towards fulfilling the qualification requirements.
- (4) Some students already working in the sector who study remotely in conjunction with their professional work, face capacity problems, spend less time studying due to their busy schedules, and do not maintain the same motivation throughout their studies.
- (5) Student drop-out rate is relatively high.
- (6) The low number of students may lead to the study programme's closure.
- (7) Low number of foreign visiting lecturers.
- (8) The sequence of study courses is not justified in all semesters. Some study courses would logically be in a reverse order, as e.g. directing needs a solid framework of project implementation

skills to incorporate creativity.

(9) "Event Production", the key study course that coincides with the study programme title, is disproportionately low.

Evaluation of the study programme "Event Production and Management"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Event Production and Management"

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| (1) Part-time studies are much more self-directed and require outstanding digitally well-organised study materials, well-planned contact hours and tutorials, extended customised feedback, and creativity in using diverse and innovative pedagogical methods to train specific skills. |
| (2) To make learning more self-directed and to balance the study load with the objectives and overall parameters of the programme, its overall service design needs to be improved. A digitally well-organised circulation of learning materials, well-planned contact hours and tutorials, enhanced tailored feedback, and application creativity through diverse and innovative pedagogical methods to train specific professional skills in line with professional standards should be improved to excellence. |
| (3) The sequence of courses should be arranged in a logically sound - better sequence, reinforcing complementarity to achieve the knowledge, skills and competencies set out in the occupational standard. |
| (4) Considering that "Event Production" is only 3% of the key course that coincides with the degree programme title, the title of the degree programme needs to be reconsidered. |
| (5) Scientific research and publications focused specifically on the study of public events and the strengthening of expertise in the professional field would be vital and should be integrated into the study content. |
| (6) Stricter verification of the thesis topics should be related to various aspects of event management, but not to broader tourism content. |

Long-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| (1) Given the overall goals and positioning of the TU Faculty of International Tourism and its success in attracting international students, this could be developed prospectively as an English language programme, as a joint programme with one of the foreign partner universities. |
| (2) Regularly monitor the student's progress with studies and introduce some tutoring to decrease the students' dropout rate. |
| (3) Increase the study programme's promotional activities. |
| (4) Increase the number of foreign visiting lecturers. |

II - "Tourism and Hospitality Management" ASSESSMENT

II - "Tourism and Hospitality Management" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. "Tourism and Hospitality Management" (42812) as a professional bachelor study programme aims to "provide balanced, recognised and competitive tourism education content that meets the needs of Latvia and the world (...) enabling its graduates to demonstrate professional general and specialised knowledge corresponding to the principles of sustainable tourism development and enhancing their ability to make decisions in the changing business environment, assume responsibility and initiative and independently tailor their professional development according to industry needs" (SAR, p. 106) and is considered the most strategically important tourism study programme of TU and fully meets the thematic direction of studies and is forming TU identity as a tourism stakeholder.

The study programme has been a tradition since the beginning of TU, and it is now the oldest-running bachelor-level tourism study programme in Latvia. Over the years, the study programme has attracted a relatively large number of students, including from outside the EU.

The study programme promises to equip students with 21 general skills and competencies and 30 professional skills and competencies of the tourism sector (SAR, pp. 110-112), leading to a high degree of personal development during their studies.

The skills acquired during the study programme are necessary for working in a tourism or hospitality organisation, and the study course content is regularly updated in cooperation with stakeholders in the sector (SAR, p. 113). Although a strong focus on entrepreneurship aligns with the professional standard and the TU strategy, many students also focus on working in the public sector (according to interviews with students, alumni and industry representatives).

The Tourism Research Centre has been primarily hibernated. According to the website (<https://www.turiba.lv/lv/zinatne/turisma-petniecibas-centrs>), the director is the dean and an active lecturer involved in the sector. Applied research and scholarly activity have even more potential to be integrated into the study environment.

The experts conclude that the study programme is entirely relevant to the field of study and is a core tourism study programme at the Bachelor level with a wide range of applications and further adaptability in various tourism and hospitality professions.

2.1.2. The title is comprehensive, in line with the content of the study programme and the professional qualification to be obtained. The code "42812" is relevant ('42' - first cycle professional study programme (full-time studies of four years); '8' - educational thematic group "Services"; '81' - "Individual services" and '812' - "Tourism and Leisure Organisation"). The study programme is a full-time study (four years), part-time extramural studies, and part-time extramural distance learning studies (four years and four months) programme.

The Professional Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and the Tourism Services Manager qualification are in line with the subject distribution of the study programme content (Annex 1).

Tourism Services Manager as a professional qualification is relevant to the content of the study programme and the objectives of the programme implementation. If fully achieved, it will ensure broad competitiveness in the field of tourism and hospitality (SAR, pp. 110-112).

Admission requirements relate to the study programme objectives, content and learning outcomes. For students from Latvia, the admission requirements are clearly defined and understandable (competition based on centralised exam results in the following subjects: Latvian language, foreign language (English, German, French or Russian) and mathematics - SAR, p. 112). For international students, especially those coming from outside the EU, the nine admission requirements are more complex (SAR, pp. 112-113). Still, during the expert interviews with the management, it was

mentioned that the admission rules need to be revised, partly due to the high drop-out rates observed, especially during the first year. Changing national immigration policy is mentioned as one of the threats to the sustainability of the studies (SAR, p. 21).

The duration and format of the studies are correctly matched. There are no strict requirements for teaching in English. English can be taught at the B2 level, but strict certificate requirements are not compulsory. The lecturer submits a CV and indicates the level of knowledge, which should be at least B2 (according to interviews with lecturers). On the other hand, this is also governed by market conditions - to feel comfortable and deliver classes, lecturers need to have a very good level of English. Otherwise, the quality of studies suffers. For more internationalisation and joint programmes with foreign universities in the future, introducing C1-level requirements would be recommended, allowing for more complementary and more varied teaching and communication with foreign colleagues and other stakeholders.

2.1.3. No changes in the parameters of the study programme have been made, but they affected the content of the study programme. Changes in the content of the study programme (SAR, p. 109) are reasoned and aligned with industry trends, lecturers' workload, and thematic knowledge, and they also involve experts in the field. The regional context of the studies is discussed, which, in many cases (e.g., microeconomics and taxes), includes examples from Latvia and the Baltic states and specific taxation systems that are less relevant to other countries. At the same time, the large number of international students from outside the EU calls for a more global approach to study programme content. Referring to the expert interviews with lecturers, this is widely used in teaching each specific study content.

Expert opinion is that the study programme can include specific region-specific courses, but the content can be tailored to the particular place of origin of the students each time. More emphasis can be put on the content of the course lessons; care should be taken to ensure that the examples are generalisable to different contexts. An alternative is to globalise course titles and make the content of the degree more international.

2.1.4. The export potential of tourism and hospitality services in Latvia still needs to be fully exploited, and tourism demand is expected to grow both regionally and globally, creating demand for professional staff (SAR, p. 113). Most of the tourism and hospitality sector is concentrated in the Riga metropolitan area, which gives the advantage of locating studies in the capital. The capital is also an international environment with more significant advantages for attracting international students. In line with the orientation of the professional bachelor's study programme, the study process strongly emphasises professional knowledge and practical skills, which are highly valued by employers (SAR, p. 114; interviews with industry members).

About 2/3 of the alumni survey respondents (127 respondents; Annex 8; SAR, p. 114) admitted that they had already gotten a job while studying and that combining studies with work in the specific study programme is possible, especially when studying part-time. 27% of study programme graduates admit that they work as managers, 47% of respondents work as specialists or executives, and ~29% admit that they continue their studies at TU after graduation (SAR, p. 114). After successfully completing their studies, alumni should be confident about their competitiveness in the labour market and employability in the professional field.

There is a very high drop-out rate and a large gap between the number of students enrolled and those who successfully graduate (4-5 times difference in some years) (SAR, p. 116). The reasons for dropping out are only partially identified, although it is a systematic problem. Some additional reasons are given for the field of study as a whole, recognising that from the 2024/2025 academic year, this will be a focus of increased attention, particularly among international students (according to the responses to the experts' follow-up request).

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

The study programme is a core TU Tourism Studies identity product and has a lengthy implementation tradition. It promises to provide students with 21 general skills and competencies and 30 professional skills and competencies in the field of tourism, ensuring a high level of personal development during their studies. The tourism study programme benefits from solid industry visibility, a longstanding tradition, and a strategic location in the capital, enhancing its appeal to local and international students. Graduates are well-regarded by employers, ensuring strong competitiveness and employability in the tourism and hospitality sector. The programme faces a significant drop-out rate and a large discrepancy between enrolment and graduation numbers, partly due to unclear admission criteria for international students. Addressing these criteria and systematically tracking drop-out reasons are essential to improving student retention and success rates.

Strengths:

- (1) Good visibility in the tourism and hospitality sector and a reputation for graduates' competencies among professional employers.
- (2) The programme has been a tradition since the beginning of TU, the oldest bachelor-level tourism study programme in Latvia.
- (3) Most of the tourism and hospitality sector is concentrated in the Riga agglomeration, which gives it the advantage of being the study location in the capital. The capital is also an international environment with more significant advantages for attracting international students.
- (4) After successfully completing their studies, alumni should be confident about their competitiveness in the labour market and employability in the professional field.
- (5) The study programme attracts many students, including those from outside the EU.

Weaknesses:

- (1) There is a very high drop-out rate and a large gap between the number of students enrolled and those who successfully graduate (4-5 times difference in some years). There are no accurate records of the reasons why students drop out.
- (2) Admission criteria for international students need to be reviewed and made more specific to reduce the reasons for dropping out.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. Study programme Tourism and hospitality management (42812) is a professional bachelor study programme planned to acquire the necessary knowledge in the tourism and hospitality business (SAR, p. 117). It is provided as full-time studies (4 years) and part-time extramural studies (4 years and four months) in Latvian, as full-time studies in English (new), and as part-time distance learning, four years four months in Latvian (SAR, pp. 107-108). The content of the study programme in English is identical to that of the study programme offered in Latvian. The content and outcomes of the part-time study programme are identical to those of the full-time programme. However, due to fewer contact hours, the study course descriptions include different independent tasks to prepare students for regular assessments.

The goals of the study courses are closely aligned with the overall goals of the study programme: equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary for developing sustainable tourism. For example, the aims, objectives, and outcomes of courses such as Tour Organisation and

Management, Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability, Introduction to Tourism, and Tourism Geography support this goal. The programme addresses the need for knowledge in navigating a dynamic business environment, reflected in courses like Management of Sustainable Organisations, Macroeconomics, Tourism Economics, and Globalisation. There are also study courses within which students can develop their communication skills, ethical behaviour, and develop their initiative (SAR, p. 117).

The first-year study courses provide a foundation of general knowledge and essential skills for working in the tourism industry, preparing students for roles in various sectors. Study courses like Introduction to Tourism, Hospitality and Customer Service, and Tourism Geography lay the groundwork for future studies. In the second year, students focus on building the skills and competencies needed to manage departments or units within the industry. The third year emphasises marketing, sales, and commercial expertise. In contrast, the fourth year develops competencies required for working in an international environment and deepens understanding of the tourism ecosystem (SAR, Annex 5, Study course map of first cycle professional study programme; Annex 6, Study plans for first cycle professional study programme; Annex 7, Study course descriptions of first cycle professional study programme). Students can choose between two programme study modules: Tour Management and Logistics or Hotel and Restaurant Management (SAR, p. 119).

The State examination includes writing a bachelor's thesis, scheduled for the end of the studies. Thesis topics are reviewed during departmental meetings, with input from faculty members, including industry professionals involved in the study programme. Additionally, industry representatives are invited to participate in thesis defence committees, which helps to stay in line with industry trends.

The study programme complies with the national education standard for bachelor's degree programmes, as set out in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 305 of 13 June 2023 "Regulations on the State Standard for Vocational Higher Education" (SAR, Annex 3; <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/342818-noteikumi-par-valstsprofesionalas-augstakas-izglitibas-standartu>).

Also, compliance with the occupational standard for Tourism services manager approved 07.06.2023 is ascertained (<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS253.pdf>; SAR, Annex 4). There is a visible match between the expected skills and attitudes, professional knowledge, and competencies and the corresponding study courses in the Tourism and Hospitality Management study programme.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. Study implementation methods are used within the study programme, contributing to achieving the study course and study programme goals. According to SAR, p. 121, among the methods in use are lectures, seminars, discussions, practical sessions, online resources, scientific literature reviews, applied games, individual and group consultations, internships, study tours, case analyses, and independent practical work (both individual and group). Students also participate in presentations and conferences via the Webex platform. Modern information technologies are extensively integrated into the learning process (SAR, Annex 6, Study plans for first cycle professional study programme; Annex 7, Study course descriptions of first cycle professional study programme).

No special deviations were detected in the implementation of distance learning; the students praised it. Of course, this kind of method requires a bit more of one's engagement. The implementation methods are also adapted to this type of implementation; materials are available through learning platforms.

Case studies serve as a vital tool for analysis, discussion, and instruction, where students engage with scenarios based on real-life situations. They observe, analyse, record, implement, draw

conclusions, summarise, or make recommendations through these cases. Study tours (in cooperation with the Mogotel Hotel group) are also vital, offering students hands-on experience that deepens their understanding of theoretical concepts. Discussion methods provide a collaborative platform for exchanging ideas between students and teachers or among students to enhance thinking, learning, problem-solving, and comprehension. Participants share diverse viewpoints, respond to others' ideas, and reflect on their own to build knowledge and understanding. All these aspects prove a general tendency for student-centred learning and teaching in this study programme. Students and graduates confirmed this.

2.2.4. The programme includes a total of four internships, amounting to 39 CP: a 4-week internship in the 1st study year (6 CP), a 4-week internship in the 2nd study year (6 CP), a 6-week internship in the 3rd study year (9 CP), and a pre-diploma internship in the 4th study year lasting 12 weeks (18 CP). The "Practice Regulations" document in Annex 8 outlines the procedures for organising these internships. The internship complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. The internship tasks align with the achievable learning outcomes and adhere to the requirements of applicable regulatory provisions.

TU-offered practice companies are those where internships are organised within the framework of cooperation agreements concluded by the faculty. Students have the opportunity to complete internships abroad with a dedicated coordinator for international internships at TU who reviews offers and assists students. Additionally, various hotels in Latvia are interested in hosting students for internships, and students are informed about these local opportunities and take advantage of them. International students are also assisted in the same way.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. The final theses for the study programme encompass various subjects, including marketing, product development, and destination management (SAR, Other Annexes, Summary of thesis topics in first cycle study programme "Tourism and Hospitality Management"). Recently, there has been increasing interest in issues exploring the intersection of IT with the tourism and hospitality industries and the application of various technological solutions. Given the study programme's international student body, the topics deal with local and relevant issues, as well as international and global issues (e.g., the Strategic development plan of the society "Skydive Latvia"; Perspectives of mountain tourism development in Tian Shan mountains in Uzbekistan; Colombo airport service quality: case study of China Eastern airlines; Current challenges of the tour guide operation in Klaipeda, Lithuania).

An overview of the past topics elaborated in the final thesis confirms that they correspond to the study programme.

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

The goals of the study courses are closely aligned with the overall goals of the study programme. The study programme complies with the national education standard for bachelor's degree programmes and the occupational standard for Tourism services manager. Study implementation methods that contribute to achieving the study courses and study programme goals and student-centred learning and teaching in this study programme are present. The internship complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. International students are also assisted in the same way as Latvian students. Topics elaborated in the final theses confirm that they correspond to the study programme.

Strengths:

- (1) Long tradition of implementing this study programme.
- (2) The content and outcomes of the part-time study programme are identical to those of the full-time programme.
- (3) Good connections established with the industry allow further study programme development in line with trends.
- (4) Students can complete internships in Latvia or abroad through cooperation agreements or with help from a dedicated coordinator for international internships at TU.

Weaknesses have not been detected, but please review the remarks in the Study field section.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. The TU premises have sufficiently equipped lecture halls, conference rooms, and computer labs for holding lectures. Students have full access to a modern library and a large reading room, computer classes, and workplaces. The premises are equipped with high-quality visual aids, such as whiteboards, screens, multimedia projectors, and audio-video systems.

TU has two fully equipped auditoriums for practical training. These spaces are furnished with computers, projectors, and specialised equipment for working in travel agencies, hotels, and restaurants. Students attend classes in a room outfitted with hotel and catering equipment, where they develop practical skills such as table setting, customer service, and the use of hotel equipment. This allows students to combine theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience, a crucial element for tourism and hospitality students to transition into the workforce after graduation successfully.

According to SAR p.128, in the "Hotel Management System" study course, students receive training using the OPERA Cloud Property Management System (PMS). They gain experience with modules such as reservations, guest registration, room management, and payment processing, which are essential for hotel customer service. In the "Tourism Agencies and Information Systems" study course, students are trained on the Amadeus GDS database, acquiring skills to work with reservation system tools.

The TU IT Department manages the IT environment. It oversees the maintenance and development of computer hardware and the network, as well as the operation and improvement of the TU information system BATIS. The Moodle environment is used for part-time distance learning (e-learning).

TU allocates funds for the development of library technologies, acquisition of databases, and expanding the collection with the latest literature, in line with the growing number of students. The list of required literature is updated annually based on the preferences of academic staff and students. TU library offers an open-access system with electronic registration for issuing and returning literature, as well as electronic catalogues of student work through the ALISE library information system: <https://w3i.turiba.lv/Alise/en/home.aspx>. The library holds the latest scientific literature on tourism, hospitality, management, and other relevant fields. The collection of business-related books available in the library is well-suited to support a successful study process for both Latvian and international students. (SAR p. 127).

2.3.2. Not relevant.

2.3.3. TU's operations are managed by the company "Biznesa augstskola Turība" Ltd, which operates independently in commercial activities. The financial resources used for implementing the study programme are provided by "Biznesa augstskola Turība" Ltd and are aligned with business principles aimed at generating profit.

Critical elements in budget planning are technology upgrades, training courses and seminars, upgrading existing programmes, infrastructure development, scholarships and financial aid.

According to SAR p. 129, the cost per student in the first-cycle full-time study programme is EUR 1,506, but it is EUR 1,319 for part-time studies. The most significant proportion—27% of the costs—comprises academic staff salaries. The other considerable costs are development, information technology, study support costs (16%), capital repairs of facilities and premises, daily maintenance, utilities, security and technical support costs (15%) and other study-related expenses, including library costs (13%).

While the optimal number of applicants to start a group is at least ten students, smaller groups are occasionally launched. As enrollment increases over time (due to transfers from other study programmes or students returning after an academic break), the study programme typically stabilises in profitability.

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

The resources to support the study process are ample and diverse. They are regularly updated and expanded, ensuring students have access to the latest data and tools used in the practical training of their study courses. As enrollment rises over time, the study programme tends to stabilise in terms of profitability metrics.

Strengths:

- (1) Library resources (books, i-books, databases, periodicals) and equipment are widely available and accessible to students.
- (2) Two fully equipped auditoriums are available for practical training, which allows students to combine theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience.

Weaknesses have not been detected, but please look at the remarks in the Study field section.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The resources to support the study process are ample and diverse. (Analysis in Chapter 4.3.above).

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. Teaching staff employed in the study programme correspond to TU goals and objectives (SAR, p. 130) and have qualifications following requirements of the regulatory acts (Annex - Annex 9.

Information about the academic staff of study field). There are 39 lecturers involved in implementing the study programme (SAR, p. 130). Of them, 20 are elected (4 professors, three associate professors, 5 assistant professors, and eight lecturers), while 19 are guest lecturers.

Four academic staff members involved in implementing the study programme have the status of experts of the Scientific Council of Latvia, which is a relevant indicator of quality.

The lecturer's role is crucial for creating a quality learning experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competencies, and skills among students. An increasingly diverse student population and a greater focus on learning outcomes require student-centred learning and teaching; thus, the teacher's role changes. Since several lecturers with a master's degree and professional tourism and hospitality experience are involved in the study process, more training in pedagogical skills should be available for them. Lecturers are encouraged to develop teamwork skills.

There are no strict certification requirements for teachers' English language skills. Actually, the B2 level is sufficient based only on the level of proficiency indicated by each teacher on their CV.

2.4.2. This study programme has a stable composition of engaged academic staff. About 40% of the academic staff are professionals in the tourism and hospitality industry, which is higher than other study programmes in this study field. Accordingly, students are provided with practical experience.

Department meetings are also places for panel discussions, cooperation and ensuring the interrelation between the study programme and study courses.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. There are international publications in remarkable journals, but most are not indexed in top international scientific databases, which limits their impact. The academic staff published about 150 scientific publications, including 22 are indexed in Scopus or Web of Science (WoS) databases (SAR, p. 64). However, several papers marked in lecturers' CVs published in WoS relate to Emerging WoS. Although some improvements have been noticeable in recent years, further efforts are needed to increase the number of publications in high-positioned international databases. Also, papers related to core academic topics in tourism and hospitality are underrepresented.

Apart from lecturers with PhD, few lecturers with a master's degree and work experience related to the industry are involved in the study process. Their professional experience in relevant companies within the sector contributes to students' personal development and competencies.

Applied research and scientific activity are only partly integrated into the study environment. Tourism Research Centre's activities have stagnated in recent years compared with its ambitions after its establishment and positioning as the only centre of its kind in the Baltics.

2.4.5. According to the SAR (p. 133), departmental meetings are the primary mechanism of inter-teaching cooperation, implementation, and development of study programmes. The structure of the study programme is discussed in those meetings. Teaching staff members of thematically related study courses cooperate in developing curricula based on the survey results. They also have a mutual dialogue to ensure the non-overlapping content of study courses and to apply the latest trends in the tourism and hospitality industry to study courses.

Cooperation between staff members is also visible in their joint participation in research projects, joint publications, and joint work in organising conferences.

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

The qualifications of the teaching staff correspond with the state requirements and are suitable with the subjects taught in the study programme. The teaching staff's composition is stable and suitable for fulfilling the objectives of the study programme. Teaching staff members cooperate mutually to

improve the study programme. It is confirmed that learning is student-centred and problem-based.

Strengths:

- (1) Appropriate qualifications of the teaching staff.
- (2) A high number of teaching staff with work experience in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Weaknesses:

- (1) Applied research and scientific activity are only partly integrated into the study environment. Tourism Research Centre's activities have stagnated in recent years compared with its ambitions after its establishment and positioning as the only centre of its kind in the Baltics.
- (2) There are no strict certification requirements for teachers' English language skills since B2 is considered sufficient based on the level of proficiency given by each teacher on their CV only.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The qualifications of teaching staff comply with the conditions for implementing of the study programme and the requirements set out in the regulatory enactments.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the applicable Regulations on the State Standard for Professional Higher Education. It is organised according to the Law on Higher Education Institutions, and TU's internal normative acts.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

It complies with the professional standard for Tourism services manager. (Annex: 4_ST atbilstība prof.standartam eng.pdf)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study courses are written in Latvian and English, and comply with the requirements outlined in Section 561, Paragraph 2 and Section 562, Paragraph 2 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of diploma complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued. (Annex: ST diploms un pielikums eng.pdf)

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Teaching staff is proficient in the official language.

(Annexes: cv_eng.pdf ; 11_Apliecinajums par valsts valodas zināšanām_eng.edoc ; 9_Mācībspēku saraksts virzienam_eng.pdf).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Teaching staff are proficient in English at the B2 level, but it would be beneficial if the English teaching requirements were raised to the C1 level.

(Annex: 12_Apliecinajums par ENG zināšanām_eng.edoc)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions.

(Annex: 7_Studiju_ligums_tipveida_eng.pdf)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The TU has confirmed that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme (Tourism and Hospitality management) or in another higher education institution, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

5_sadarbība par izglītība snodrošināšanu_eng.pdf

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The TU has confirmed that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's licence is revoked due to the TU's actions (actions or omissions) and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme. CONFIRMATION Compensation guarantee for students.docx

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions requirements and other regulatory enactments.

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

Study programme Tourism and Hospitality Management (42812) fully meets the thematic direction of studies and is forming TU's identity as a tourism stakeholder. The title, code, degree to be obtained, professional qualification, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. There is a very high drop-out rate and a large gap between the number of students enrolled and those who successfully graduate. The goals of the study courses are closely aligned with the overall goals of the study programme. The study programme complies with the national education standard for bachelor's degree study programmes and the occupational standard for Tourism services manager. Study implementation methods which contribute to

achieving the study course and study programme goals, and student-centred learning and teaching in this study programme are present. The internship complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. International students are also assisted in the same way as Latvian students. Topics elaborated in the final theses confirm that they correspond to the study programme. The resources to support the study process are ample and diverse. They are regularly updated and expanded, ensuring students have access to the latest data and tools used in the practical training of their study courses. The qualifications of the teaching staff correspond with the state requirements and are suitable for the subjects taught in the study programme. The composition of the teaching staff is stable and suitable for fulfilling the study programme objectives. Teaching staff members cooperate mutually to improve the study programme. It is confirmed that learning is student - centred and problem-based. Experts noticed some lack of confidence in English language skills on B2 level only for some of administration members (e.g. International Admissions Office, librarians). The content of the study programme in English is identical to that of the study programme offered in Latvian. The content and outcomes of the part-time study programme are identical to those of the full-time programme.

The study programme is designed to be delivered in both distance and full-time face-to-face mode. The experts had the opportunity to interview full-time students. The different forms of study have well-planned study content and full compliance with the requirements of the professional standard, and the experts consider that the implementation of distance learning does not raise concerns about the quality of the study programme objectives, provided that the study work is planned accurately and that full feedback and regular communication is provided. However, given the high drop-out rate, self-discipline would be even lower for distance learning than for full-time studies, without contributing to higher completion rates.

Strengths:

- (1) Good visibility in the tourism and hospitality sector and a reputation for graduates' competencies among professional employers.
- (2) The study programme has been a tradition since the beginning of TU, the oldest bachelor-level tourism study programme in Latvia.
- (3) Most of the tourism and hospitality sector is concentrated in the Riga agglomeration, which gives it the advantage of being the study location in the capital. The capital is also an international environment with more significant advantages for attracting international students.
- (4) After successfully completing their studies, alumni should have no doubts about their competitiveness in the labour market and employability in the professional field.
- (5) The study programme attracts many students, including those from outside the EU.
- (6) Good connections established with the industry allow further study programme development in line with trends.
- (7) Appropriate qualifications of the teaching staff.
- (8) A high number of teaching staff with working experience in the tourism and hospitality industry.
- (9) Library items (books, i-books, databases, periodicals) and equipment are widely available and accessible to students.
- (10) Two fully equipped auditoriums are available for practical training, which allows students to combine theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience.

Weaknesses:

- (1) There is a very high drop-out rate and a large gap between the number of students enrolled and those who successfully graduate. There are no accurate records of the reasons why students drop out.
- (2) Admission criteria for international students need to be reviewed and made more specific to reduce the reasons for dropping out.

- (3) There are no strict certification requirements for teachers' English language skills; B2 is considered sufficient based on the level of proficiency indicated by each teacher on their CV only.
- (4) The number of international visiting lecturers is insufficient.

Evaluation of the study programme "Tourism and Hospitality Management"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Tourism and Hospitality Management"

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|--|
| (1) Admission requirements for international students need to be clarified. |
| (2) Accurate monitoring of the different reasons for dropping out must be introduced to reduce the high number of drop-outs. |

Long-term recommendations

- | |
|--|
| (1) Applied research and scholarly activity have even more potential to be integrated into the study environment, making the most of the Tourism Research Centre's active role. |
| (2) Improve internationalisation and plan joint study programmes with foreign universities in the future, introducing C1-level English language requirements would be recommended. This would allow for more complementary and varied teaching and communication with foreign colleagues and other stakeholders. |
| (3) Increase the number of invited foreign professors from various disciplines. |
| (4) Scientific research and publications focused specifically on the study of tourism and hospitality and the strengthening of scientific expertise in the professional field would be vital, and they should be integrated into the study content. |

II - "Tourism Strategic Management " ASSESSMENT

II - "Tourism Strategic Management " ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. "Tourism Strategic Management" is a professional master study programme that aligns with the thematic area of study and creates complementarity and continuity with the two professional bachelor-level programmes in this study field (SAR, p. 167, 2nd and 3rd paragraph). As full or part-time studies (on-site or extramural), they are implemented in Latvian (SAR, p. 161) or full-time in English (SAR, p. 162). This makes it possible for international students to study tourism at the Masters level in the same institution after successfully completing a Bachelor's degree. According to interviews with students or alumni, they are satisfied with the quality and process of their studies and the opportunities offered by successfully completing the study programme.

2.1.2. The study programme "Tourism Strategic Management" (47812) is a second cycle of professional higher education relevant to the 7th professional qualification level and the professional

qualification “Head of the organisation.” The studies are implemented as full-time (2 years or 1.5 years) or part-time extramural studies (2.1 years or 1.8 years).

The aim of the study programme is “To educate and prepare students as entrepreneurs, managers and leading specialists to work in the tourism and hospitality sector, who (...) promote innovation through interdisciplinary solutions and creative approaches to the development of the tourism and hospitality sector and can implement measures to ensure sustainable and responsible global development in both the business environment and tourism destinations” - the emphasis lacks “strategic”, “effective” management, which to some extent, of course, can be attributed to the word “responsibly”.

The code “47812” of the study programme confirms the programme and its parameters (“47”—second cycle professional study programme; “8”—educational thematic group; “Services” and “81” - “Individual services”; “812”—Educational programme group “Tourism and Leisure Organisation”). The study programme objectives and professional qualification obtained correspond to this.

Entry requirements are a professional or academic bachelor's degree or a professional qualification diploma. There are additional requirements for international students, especially from outside the EU. It would be advisable to introduce an additional admission requirement of a professional or academic bachelor's degree or professional qualification for potential students who have not previously studied tourism - a motivation letter explaining how they see the complementarity and compatibility of their studies to date with tourism studies and the development of their professional career. Consideration should be given how to avoid some overlapping of content (according to the MA students interviewed) for students who have previously studied tourism at the undergraduate level at TU or elsewhere.

The duration and scope of the study programme, as well as the language and format of its delivery, are reasonable and justified. The Head of the Organisation qualification promises students 17 general skills and 22 professional skills and competencies, which, if successfully completed, give them a competitive advantage in the job market (SAR, pp. 165-167). Students and graduates mention soft skills, customer psychology, marketing, and working with different generational groups in the tourism and hospitality sectors, which would be complementary but are not sufficiently covered in the current study programme.

The content of the study programme, which should also be included in the titles of the compulsory part of the study courses, should follow a stronger emphasis on digitisation. There is a lack of destination management and visitor experience management (at a comprehensive level) study courses. (Appendix 6, Study plans for the Second cycle professional study programme “Tourism strategic management”). Industry representatives in experts' interviews point out that there is scope for developing a niche for international hotel chains' CEO / executive competencies.

In interviews with students, students who have previously studied tourism at the undergraduate level identified overlaps in the content of some study courses, taking into account that students with no prior knowledge of tourism are also enrolled.

2.1.3. The parameters of the study programme have not changed, but its content has.

2.1.4. The management of tourist attractions, product development, destination management, offer development, and the preparation of sustainable and exportable products for sale require the training of qualified professionals. Small enterprises dominate the sector, and there is a strong demand for Master-level management competencies to improve competitiveness. Market trends are generally well-argued. However, most of the references are to the situation in Latvia, with less justification for trends in countries where international students traditionally come from. (SAR, pp. 167-168). This is particularly relevant in a situation where the number of full-time students studying in Latvian is decreasing and the number of students studying in English is increasing (SAR, pp.

169-170).

The number of students enrolled in the study programme has been variable; however, the number of graduates has decreased, and there is a big drop-out from the studies. Management recognises that one reason for dropping out is different levels of prior knowledge (SAR, p. 170), which needs to be adequately addressed by updating and clarifying the conditions of admission.

Successful completion of studies gives students a competitive advantage in the labour market in the professional qualification “Head of the Organisation” with 17 general skills and 22 professional skills and competencies.

According to interviews with students, alumni, and industry experts, close cooperation with the industry ensures up-to-date study content. The importance of networking and professional contacts provided by studying at TU is highlighted.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

Successful completion of studies gives students a competitive advantage in the labour market in the professional qualification “Head of the Organisation” with 17 general skills and 22 professional skills and competencies. The indicators analysed do not point to significant problems in implementing the study programme. Still, several opportunities for improving the quality of the study programme are listed below. Its strengths are also indicated.

Strengths:

- (1) The Master's level studies complement the two Bachelor study programmes and are fully integrated into the thematic field of study.
- (2) English language content, ability to attract international students.
- (3) Close cooperation with industry ensures up-to-date study content.
- (4) The networking and professional contacts made while studying at TU provide additional opportunities for career development.

Weaknesses:

- (1) While the objectives of the study programme are clearly defined, the list of keywords lacks “strategic” and “effective” management (taking into account the standard of the profession and the needs of the sector), which can undoubtedly be attributed to the word “responsible” to a certain extent.
- (2) The changes in study programme content have not been explained or justified in SAR.
- (3) Identified overlaps in the content of some study courses for students who have previously studied tourism at the undergraduate level, taking into account that students with no prior knowledge of tourism are also enrolled.
- (4) Market trends are generally well-argued. However, most of the references are to the situation in Latvia, with less justification for trends in countries where international students traditionally come from.
- (5) The content of the study programme highlighting compulsory part of the courses could be made more with the focus on holistic Tourism and hospitality management

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The goal of the study programme Tourism Strategic Management (47812) is to educate and

train master's students to become entrepreneurs, managers, and leading specialists in the tourism and hospitality industry. Graduates will use the knowledge, skills, and competencies gained during the study process to drive innovation by applying interdisciplinary solutions and creative approaches to industry development. They will also be equipped to implement initiatives that support sustainable and responsible global development, both within the business sector and in tourist destinations (SAR, p. 159).

According to the SAR (Annex 3; Annex 4), the structure, study course offerings, and content of the study programme have been developed in line with current trends in the field of hospitality sciences and labor market demands. The study programme also complies with several regulatory frameworks, including the national education standard for the second cycle professional study programme, as set out in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 305 of 13.06.2023 Regulations on the State Standard for Professional Higher Education (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/342818-noteikumi-par-valsts-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-standartu>) and with the Occupational Standard for Head of Organization, approved 18.09.2019 (<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-114.pdf>).

The content of the study programme is regularly updated in collaboration with tourism industry organizations, according to the UN World Tourism Organization's TedQual recommendations for developing tourism education programmes, with input from the academic staff, who bring knowledge and practical experience from the industry to ensure the study programme remains relevant and aligned with current industry trends.

The study programme is offered in both full-time and part-time formats. The content of the full-time study programme, available in both Latvian and English, is identical, with the only difference being the language of instruction. The content of the study programme remains the same in the part-time extramural format (SAR, p. 171).

The study courses are interconnected and complementary, students gain interdisciplinary, business related and sustainability knowledge from the content (SAR, Annex 5. Mapping of the study programme; Annex 6. Study programme plan; Annex 7. Course descriptions). The content of the study programme is topical.

2.2.2. The study courses within the study programme are regularly updated to reflect current industry trends, new theoretical developments, and relevant changes in the tourism business and strategic management. Adjustments are also made in response to updates in the regulatory framework. The study programme is periodically reviewed with input from students and other stakeholders. It incorporates the latest theoretical knowledge in areas such as economics, business, human resources, technological advancements, and other tourism-related fields (SAR, p. 173).

As the TU set their objective to ensure a close link between business and applied science through topical and meaningful research (TU Development strategy 2021-2025, Objective No. 3), the increase of acquired research projects would add a significant input to the further updating of the study programme with the newest and relevant content. Even in the SWOT analysis of the study field they mention as one of the weaknesses: "Little regular involvement of faculty lecturers in large and international research projects" (SAR, p. 20). Although industry professionals are already involved in courses like International Tourism Environment, Hotel Operations Management, and Legal Order of Tourism, case studies based on real industry needs are also analyzed.

Interviewed students expressed their satisfaction with the knowledge of professors, with the study materials, case studies they deal with, but they were not acquainted with the research the professors do, or that they incorporate into the study course content. Overall, the awarding of a degree is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant field of science.

2.2.3. In each study course, the professor selects suitable teaching methods to effectively support the achievement of the study course and study programme learning outcomes. The study

programme is being delivered through a variety of teaching methods such as lectures, seminars, discussions, practical classes, online resources, scientific literature review, applied games, individual and group consultations, field practice, study tours, case analysis, independent practical work (both individual and group-based), presentations, and conferences via the Webex platform (SAR, Annex 7. Course descriptions).

Students praised the ways how the study course content is being presented to them, of course not all the professors are using the same methods and are not equally adept at using new technologies for teaching. This is also presented in the SWOT analysis, where it is stated that it is one of the weaknesses: "Intergenerational challenges between the academic staff and students on the use of technology in the study process" (SAR, p. 20). They are addressing this issue with constant training through seminars and workshops for teaching staff.

During the studies, students apply their theoretical knowledge by conducting practical research and developing real-world projects or studies. These projects are carried out in collaboration with companies and entrepreneurs in the tourism sector as part of various study courses. As part of the Strategical Tourism Planning study course, an annual study trip to a well-established tourist destination in Latvia is organized. This teaching method allows students to gain firsthand experience and insights into the operations of destination management organizations involved in tourism planning. Several successful student projects are highlighted in the SAR (p. 174). Some examples of these projects: development and marketing strategy for Karosta prison, tourism development strategy of the Upper Daugava region, evaluation of the potential of Selia as a tourist destination and development of scenarios was developed.

Students confirmed that professors provide detailed evaluations of tests, offering clear justifications for their assessments and delivering constructive feedback to students. The evaluation process is consistent, fair, and adheres to approved procedures. Each study course includes a section in the syllabus outlining the assessment criteria (SAR, Annex 7. Course descriptions).

Student-centred teaching and learning is a reality within this study programme.

2.2.4. The full-time 2-year study programme and the part-time 2.1-year study programme each includes three practice placements totaling 39 CP, with a pre-master's practice contributing 9 CP. In the full-time 1.5-year study programme and the part-time 1.8-year study programme, there is a pre-master's practice worth 9 CP. Detailed procedures for organizing these practices are outlined in the document Practice Regulations (SAR, Annex 8, Descriptions of the study courses). Tasks of Practice 1 are connected with study course goals and study programme aims - e.g. Identify and generally describe state of tourism level in the country, organisations connected with tourism in the country; Identify and describe the practice enterprise (company, organization or institution - connections with tourism, marketing, results; Write a practice report connected with previous topics (SAR, Annex 8 Descriptions of the study courses, pp. 63-64). To enhance the development of students' professional competencies and assess their academic progress, Practice 2 has been structured as seminar classes starting from the academic year 2023/2024 (interview with study programme director). The tasks of the internship course Practice 2 are related to the study programmes' learning outcomes - e.g. To describe and analyze practice places (internal, external environment); Analyse company's marketing (target audience, competitors); Write an internship report (description, observations, conclusions, proposals (SAR, Annex 8, Descriptions of the study courses, pp. 66-67)).

Cooperation agreements have been established with international companies. The foreign practice coordinator manages the logistics of international internships, including communication with students and foreign host companies, coordinating the availability of internship placements, and finalizing agreements. This coordinator, in collaboration with the faculty dean and department heads, also arranges meetings between students and representatives from foreign practice enterprises.

The faculty regularly receives inquiries from representatives of tourism and hospitality industry

companies offering internship placements. Once the suitability of these companies as practice enterprises is assessed, students are notified about available internship opportunities at specific companies. Current internship opportunities are communicated to students through the internal information system BATIS (SAR, p. 176).

The study programme is implemented also in English, and the interviewed students confirmed they get appropriate support and all the documentation.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. The titles and content of the master's theses are aligned with the goals of the study programme, they deal with both nationally and internationally important topics. They also discuss globally current topics such as the problem of overtourism, nature trails as a development opportunity. Several master's theses have won awards at TAVA Scientific competitions Research Competition (SAR, pp. 177-178).

Therefore, it is fair to say that the topics are relevant to the field and contribute to the development of the tourism industry in general.

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

The content of the study programme is topical. The transfer of relevant knowledge would be stronger if professors were more involved in large and international research projects. The awarding of a degree is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant field of science. Student-centred teaching and learning is a reality within this study programme. The opportunities and provision of internships offered to students and work organisations are effective, including for international students. The topics are relevant to the field and contribute to the development of the tourism industry in general.

Strengths:

(1) Well-established connections with the industry allow for updating the study programme and internship placements for their students.

Weaknesses:

(1) Not all the professors are involved in large international research projects.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Industry representatives and guest lecturers bring the newest trends and achievements to the content of the study programme, but professors' stronger involvement in large and international research projects would benefit even more from this transfer. There are some exceptions among the staff, but most lecturers do not have this opportunity and experience.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. At TU, lectures occur in conference halls, auditoriums, and computer classrooms, with students also having access to a modern library featuring a spacious reading room. The lecture

rooms are equipped with high-quality visual aids, including whiteboards, screens, multimedia projectors, and audio-video equipment. Students can use computer workstations; fixed and portable multimedia projectors are available as needed. TU service department ensures the cleanliness of the classrooms and common areas, with staff regularly cleaning and ventilating the spaces.

According to SAR, p. 179, TU allocates funds for the development of library technologies, acquisition of databases, and expanding the collection with the latest literature, in line with the growing number of students. The list of required literature is updated annually based on the preferences of academic staff and students. TU library offers an open-access system with electronic registration for issuing and returning literature, as well as electronic catalogues of student work through the ALISE library information system: <https://w3i.turiba.lv/Alise/en/home.aspx>. The library holds the latest scientific literature on tourism, hospitality, management, and other relevant fields. The collection of business-related books available in the library is well-suited to support a successful study process for both Latvian and international students. (SAR p. 180)

The TU IT department is responsible for maintaining the IT infrastructure. It oversees the functionality of computer equipment and the network and the operation and development of the TU internal information system BATIS and Moodle, which is used for the part-time distance learning (e-learning) process.

The provision of the resources creates prerequisites for achieving the learning outcomes.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3. The operations of TU are managed by the company "Biznesa augstskola Turība" Ltd, which operates independently in commercial activities. The financial resources used to implement the study programme are provided by "Biznesa augstskola Turība" Ltd and are aligned with business principles to generate profit.

Critical elements in budget planning are technology upgrades, training courses and seminars, upgrading existing study programmes, infrastructure development, scholarships and financial aid.

According to SAR pp. 181-182, the cost per student in the first-cycle full-time study programme is EUR 1,835, but in part-time studies EUR 1,615. The most significant proportion- 25% of the expenses - comprises academic staff salaries. The other significant costs are other academic and research activity costs (9%), other study-related costs, including library costs (14%), development, information technology, study support costs (16%, and capital repairs of facilities, premises, daily maintenance, utilities, security and technical support costs (17%).

The minimum number of enrolled students to open a group is at least 10. According to SAR, p. 182, smaller groups are occasionally formed as enrolment tends to grow over time due to transfers from other study programmes or students resuming studies after an academic break, ultimately stabilising the study programme's profitability. When deciding whether to launch a master's study programme, consideration is given to the potential contribution of master's students to scientific activities at TU, their involvement in various research projects, and their role in supporting TU's strategic development goals.

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

The resources are in line with the conditions for implementing the study programme and are available and accessible to both full-time and part-time students. They create prerequisites for achieving the learning outcomes. The study programme has the minimum number of students to ensure profitability.

Strengths:

(1) Increasing interest in the master's study programme from professionals working in the industry.

(2) The informative, material, technical, and financial provisions comply with specific features and conditions for implementing the study programme.

Weaknesses have not been detected, but please review the remarks in the Study field section.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme offers a suitable provision to ensure the achievement of the goals.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. There are 16 lecturers involved in the implementation of the study programme, while 9 of them are elected: 3 professors, 3 associate professors, 1 assistant professor, 2 lecturers, 7 guest lecturers (SAR, p. 183). The qualifications of the teaching staff employed in the implementation of the study programme correspond to national regulations and Turība University goals and objectives (Annex 9. Information about academic staff of study field). Those are (SAR, p. 182):

- Previous experience of academic work in the implementation of specific study courses;
- Previous experience of methodological work;
- Areas of scientific activity and research topics as well as scientific degree;
- Previous professional experience in event production or company management."

The competencies of the teaching staff are appropriate (education, research, memberships, positions), but a small number of teaching staff members take part in big international projects. There are 4 staff members that were given status of experts of the Scientific Council of Latvia.

It is recommended to develop further the research competencies of teachers through the creation of research groups (together with partner faculties and representatives of the tourism and hospitality industry) in which master students may be included, and thus increase international visibility of the faculty in the context of research and development.

Similarly, as in the bachelor study programme, there are no strict certification requirements for teachers' English language skills. Level B2 is considered sufficient based on the level of proficiency indicated by each teacher on their CV only.

2.4.2. The composition of the teaching staff engaged in the study programme is stable. There is a high percentage of the teaching staff that are professionals in the industry (45%), to ensure experience - based teaching and learning. The academic staff have extensive experience in the tourism and hospitality industry, as well as in strategic management (SAR, p. 184).

Regular peer observation of the classes is carried out. As it was clarified during the interviews with teaching staff and students in the assessment visit, students evaluate lecturers by survey which is anonymous after passing the study course exam. Students are encouraged to write their opinions about the teaching staff openly, with positive and negative aspects. The survey is used to improve the activities of the lecturers if needed.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. Based on the Annex 14. - List of the publications for the last 6 years, lecturers have published

articles, peer reviewed publications, monographs, conference papers. But, publications given in WoS/Scopus and by internationally high rated publishing houses are underrepresented. TU provides funding for the publication of scientific monographs and participation in conferences (SAR, p. 61). Since the study programme represents Professional Master's Degree in Business Administration, academic staff engaged in the study programme have significant academic experience in strategic management, human resources, entrepreneurship etc. There are some teaching staff members with more than 20 years of professional work experience within the industry. Almost half of the lecturers are professionals in the tourism and hospitality industry. For example, among the lecturers, there is chairman of the board and previous executive director, director of the hotel, previous manager of guest reception service, previous certified mediator and chairman of the Council of Certified Mediators.

2.4.5. Since the academic staff from different faculties are engaged in the study process, that promotes mutual contact, cohesion and cooperation among them. During the assessment visit, it was said that different seminars on current topics within the industry and education (for example about Artificial Intelligence) are organised for the academic staff, while there are working groups in which the academic staff improve knowledge and foster mutual interaction.

Cooperation among the staff is also promoted during the engagement of guest lecturers.

During the annual conference at Turiba University, the lecturers are engaged as a team in different discussion panels and develop mutual cooperation and interaction (SAR, p. 186). Off-site departmental meetings in June, aimed for education and team building, are also a place for discussing the current issues of the ending academic study year and plans for the next study year.

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

All teaching staff of the study programme have qualifications according to the regulatory acts. The composition of the teaching staff engaged in the study programme is stable. Industry professionals represent 45% of the teaching staff members to ensure a practical point of view, student-centred teaching and competitiveness of students and graduates in the labour market. The teaching staff competencies are competitive (education, research, memberships, positions), although a small number of them participate in large international projects.

Strengths:

- (1) Strong academia-industry connection, which allows continuous study programme development.
- (2) Increased demand for the study programme among professionals in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Weaknesses:

- (1) The number of international lecturers is low for a study programme to attract international students.
- (2) Small number of teaching staff members participate in large international projects.
- (3) There are no strict certification requirements for teachers' English language skills. Level B2 is considered sufficient based on the level of proficiency indicated by each teacher on their CV only.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Qualifications of the teaching staff are compliant.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the state education standard for the second cycle professional study programme, as set out in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 305 of 13.06.2023 Regulations on the State Standard for Professional Higher Education (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/342818-noteikumi-par-valsts-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitibas-standartu>).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme complies with the Occupational Standard for Head of Organization. (Annex: 4_SM atbilstība prof.standartam eng.pdf).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English language. They comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma complies with the procedure by which state-recognised higher education documents are issued. (Annex: SM diploms un pielikums eng.pdf).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff are proficient in the official language.

(Annexes: cv_eng.pdf ; 11_Apliecinajums par valsts valodas zināšanām_eng.edoc ; 9_Mācībspēku saraksts virzienam_eng.pdf).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff are proficient in English language at B2 level, an improvement to the C1 would be beneficial.

(Annex: 12_Apliecinajums par ENG zināšanām_eng.edoc).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions.

(Annex: 7_Studiju_līgums_tipveida_eng.pdf).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

TU has confirmed that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme (Tourism Competitiveness Management) in Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. Annex 5_sadarbība par izglītība snodrošināšanu_eng.pdf.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

TU has confirmed that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's licence is revoked due to the TU's actions (actions or omissions) and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions requirements and other regulatory enactments.

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

Successful completion of studies gives students a competitive advantage in the labour market in the professional qualification "Head of the Organisation" with 17 general skills and 22 professional skills and competencies. The indicators analysed do not point to significant problems in implementing the study programme. Still, a number of opportunities for improving the quality of the study programme are listed below. Its strengths are also indicated. The content of the study programme is topical. The transfer of relevant knowledge would be more substantial if professors were more involved in large and international research projects. The awarding of a degree is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant field of science. Student-centred teaching and learning are a reality within this study programme.

There has been observed some lack of confidence in English and Latvian. For example, during an onsite tour, the lecturer in the Tourism study field had a poster on the wall with major grammar and spelling mistakes. When he was asked a question, required translation to communicate in Russian. But the English language content, and the ability to attract international students both are considered as strengths of this study programme.

The opportunities and provision of internships offered to students and work organisations are compelling, including for international students. The final thesis topics are relevant to the field and contribute to the development of the tourism industry in general. The resources align with the conditions for implementing the study programme and are available and accessible to both full-time and part-time students. All teaching staff of the study programme have qualifications according to the regulatory acts. The composition of the teaching staff engaged in the study programme is stable. Industry professionals represent 45% of the teaching staff members to ensure a practical point of view, student-centred teaching and competitiveness of students and graduates in the labour market. The competencies of the teaching staff are competitive (education, research, memberships, positions), although a small number of teaching staff members take part in big international projects.

Strengths:

- (1) The Master's level studies complement the two Bachelor study programmes and are fully integrated into the thematic field of study.

- (2) Strategic and up-to-date study programme content, cooperation with industry stakeholders, and competent study programme management.
- (3) English language content, ability to attract international students.
- (4) Close cooperation with industry ensures up-to-date study content.
- (5) The networking and professional contacts made while studying at TU provide additional opportunities for career development.
- (6) Well-established connections with the industry allow for updating the study programme and internship placements for their students.
- (7) Increasing interest in the master's study programme from professionals working in the industry.
- (8) Strong academia-industry connections, which allow continuous development of the study programme.
- (9) Increased demand for study programmes among professionals in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Weaknesses:

- (1) While the objectives of the study programme are clearly defined, the list of keywords lacks "strategic" and "effective" management (taking into account the standard of the profession and the needs of the sector), which can undoubtedly be attributed to the word "responsible" to a certain extent.
- (2) The changes in the study programme content have not been explained or justified in SAR.
- (3) Identified overlaps in the content of some study courses for students who have previously studied tourism at the undergraduate level, taking into account that students with no prior knowledge of tourism are also enrolled.
- (4) Similarly as in the bachelor study programme, there are no strict certification requirements for teachers' English language skills; B2 is considered sufficient based on the level of proficiency indicated by each teacher on their CV only.
- (5) Market trends are generally well-argued. However, most of the references are to the situation in Latvia, with less justification for trends in countries where international students traditionally come from.
- (6) Not all the professors are involved in large international research projects.
- (7) The number of international lecturers is low for the study programme to attract international students.

Evaluation of the study programme "Tourism Strategic Management "

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Tourism Strategic Management "

Short-term recommendations

- 1) It would be advisable to introduce an additional admission requirement of a professional or academic bachelor's degree or professional qualification for potential students who have not previously studied tourism - a motivation letter explaining how they see the complementarity and compatibility of their previous studies with tourism studies and the development of their professional career.
- (2) It's crucial to reinforce the study programme description with relevant keywords derived from the professional standard. This alignment will ensure the curriculum meets industry requirements and provides students with the necessary skills and knowledge.

- (3) Check the vertical overlaps between the contents of the study programme and lower levels of study and whether they can be eliminated.
- (4) Strengthen promotional aspects and find new, more modern ways of communicating the study programme's advantages to potential candidates from abroad.
- (5) Consider introducing into the curriculum the necessary skills and knowledge identified by students and graduates as needing to be sufficiently covered, including soft skills, customer psychology, marketing, and working with different generational groups in the tourism and hospitality sector.
- (6) The content of the study programme, highlighting compulsory parts of the courses, could be more holistic and focus on Tourism and hospitality management.

Long-term recommendations

- (1) The changes in the study programme content should be clearly explained or justified in future SARs.
- (2) Strengthen the certification requirements for employed teachers' English language skills.
- (3) Analyse and consider the market trends of the wider region and the EU, not only Latvian conditions.
- (4) Increase the involvement of a higher number of professors in large international research projects. Organise workshops, train younger, less-experienced colleagues, transfer good practices for writing and working on research projects, and use the existing TU network opportunities.
- (5) Developing a range of international cooperation through a network of member organisations and selecting potential partners.

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

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Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation	Comment
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Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:	Fully compliant		TU is continuously improving, developing, and controlling the performance of the study field by implementing its internal quality assurance system. TU's quality assurance system contributes to achieving the aims and learning outcomes, but the feedback to students (although existing) could be improved.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)		Partially compliant	Research lines and their integration into teaching are acceptable and suitable for developing student-centred activities in the study field. Although there have been improvements in research, the number of publications in indexed journals and by international publishers is low. The number of international research projects (particularly big ones) should be increased.
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.		Partially compliant	The cooperation with Latvian and foreign organisations guarantees the fulfilment of the study field's objectives, providing internships and job placements, information, experience and good practice exchange. There is a lack of other cooperation channels besides the use of Erasmus+.
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.		Partially compliant	Some deficiencies are still present, for instance, to update aspects of digitisation and to develop a joint study programme in cooperation with foreign HEI.

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	Hotel Services Organizer (41811)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Average
2	Event Production and Management (42812)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
3	Tourism and Hospitality Management (42812)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent
4	Tourism Strategic Management (47812)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

There is none.