

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: University of Daugavpils

Study field: Economics

Experts:

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2. Natalie Aleksandra Gurvits-Suits (Secretary of the Experts Group)
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# Summary Assessment of the Study Field

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Daugavpils University (DU) is state founded and acts as an autonomous self-governing institution. DU aims at developing as academic traditions based, modern, and competitive study, scientific, and innovation centre. According to SAR DU accumulates, preserves, and maintains regional knowledge and contributes greatly to the regional development. DU is implementing three programmes in the study field of "Economics", - namely "Business and Financial Processes" (42311); "Smart Economics and Innovation" (47311), and "Economics" (51311). After examining the SAR and supplemented documents, as well as with the information obtained during the on-site visit, the experts have concluded that the study field is fully compliant with the requirement and meet the needs and the development trends of the society and national economy.

DU has a clear management structure with clear lines and responsibilities described in SAR. By involving all stakeholders in the study field council DU has the opportunity to update the study programme regularly, ensuring that programmes are in line with labour market requirements. The DU has strong and long-term cooperation with the companies, local governments, and NGOs from Latvia. The DU has developed a proper system of financing required for the implementation of the study field and the relevant study programmes, and also research activities including academic staff motivation to prepare publications and participation in the conferences, for example, DU organizes the annual scientific-practical conference "Social Sciences for Regional Development", in which the human resources involved in the study field "Economics" regularly participate

The programmes are delivered by an experienced and professionally competent academic staff. Visiting lecturers and practitioners are invited based on their competencies and practical experience. The importance of the research component is recognized and highly valued by the university. DU regularly assess the academic staff of their research activities is encouraged by granting remuneration within the existing DU budget funding for the support of further research activities. Therefore, DU has developed a strong motivation system for lecturers to carry out research activities, such as writing articles in journals indexed in SCOPUS and WEB OF SCIENCE databases and preparing research projects. The target for promoting excellence in research must be articles in top field journals in Economics. The research priorities were selected based on scientific competence and expertise in the field of study and meet the needs of the region and the tasks formulated in the Smart Specialization Strategy of Latvia. The academic staff as well as other stakeholders have contributed to developing the programme's curriculum. DU has also created a good infrastructure by providing proper premises and facilities in very good condition for the delivery of its programme. IT technologies including electronic learning platform, electronic access to the library catalogue, access to scientific databases and journals are available to students on and off-campus. It is also worth noting that books for the library are purchased on a systematic basis using state funds as well as the revenue earned by the DU.

DU has clear and effective admission procedures, terms of enrolment at DU are adjusted for various levels of studies, there are special terms of enrolment to full-time studies for foreign citizens. Detailed information concerning the admission is available on the DU website. Administrative services are well organized and tend to support students both academically and socially, creating opportunities for students to participate in research conferences, competitions, and other extracurricular activities.

Among the numerous strong points, the experts' panel would like to outline extensive cooperation with employers in the study process and programme management, presence of a strong remuneration system in place for motivating the scientific contributions of the teaching staff and students, strong vision about the future of the university and notable progress in scientific publications and international research cooperation.

In regard to the areas of improvement, the experts have outlined a low level of mobility among both

students and academic staff, limited knowledge of English language of teaching staff, high dependence on the availability of EU financed projects, associated with the risk of unstable financial position and lack of evidence of a systematic approach to the internal control system. In SAR it is mentioned the lack of motivation and initiative of teachers to get involved in outgoing teaching mobility programmes, for example, to get involved in outgoing mobility programmes, to introduce innovative ideas. Better information of students on mobility options is advisable.

According to SAR, DU has developed “Code of Ethics for employees and student” that states that students ought to support and observe academic and professional integrity, exclude plagiarism, cheating, other fraudulent activities during their studies, and the academic staff is obliged to use honest, and fair assessment of student assignments and do not permit plagiarism and cheating. During research activities, all staff members should support and maintain academic and professional integrity without causing conditions for expressions of academic fraud, or other fraudulent utilization of the intellectual property. From SAR and the interviews follow that DU envisages compulsory submitting of the electronic versions of graduation papers (Bachelor and Masters’ thesis) and check them for plagiarism. DU doesn't use appropriate plagiarism detection tools for doctoral programme PhD final theses. If students use unauthorized aids during a test or an examination or their final written work is plagiarized, they are suspended from the examination. Thus the academic integrity principles are effective and are contributing to the development of the internal culture of DU.

DU has its own website, but the information there is mostly available in Latvian (Bachelor's and Master's level professional study programmes), it is very important to develop it also in English. The description of the Doctoral study programme in English also does not include the part-time study option (4 years). The information in Latvian does not mention the language of instruction. If the University intends to implement the study programmes both in Latvian and English, then this option should be available also to students from Latvia, who specifically wish to study in English. The availability and precision of the relevant information in English on the DU webpage would be an important step towards increasing the incoming mobility, as it also serves as a first sign of the quality of the offered level of English.

#### Conclusions

The goals of the study field are clearly defined and achievable, the general strategic development directions of DU are met. During the visit, the experts were able to make sure that the decision-making is focused on the development of the field of study. The structure and procedures of DU are clearly defined, in force and efficient.

DU involves all stakeholders in updating the study programme regularly, ensuring that programmes are in line with labour market requirements. DU has strong and long-term cooperation with the companies, local governments, and NGOs from Latvia.

The DU has developed a strong motivation system for lecturers to do research- write articles in SCOPUS and WEB of SCIENCE databases, to prepare projects. The target for promoting excellence in research must be articles in top field journals in Economics.

The research priorities were selected based on scientific competence and expertise in the field of study and meet the needs of the region and the Smart Specialization Strategy of Latvia tasks. The academic integrity principles are effective and are contributing to the development of the internal culture of DU.

There are for students as well for academic staff possibility to participate in Erasmus mobility. For staff, it is necessary to increase teaching mobility.

The availability and precision of the relevant information in English on the DU webpage would be an important step towards increasing the incoming mobility, as it also serves as a first sign of the quality of the offered level of English.

#### Strong points:

1. Higher level management at DU has a strong vision about the future of the university.

2 The DU has strong and long-term cooperation with the companies, local governments, and NGOs from Latvia.

3. Evident incentives for academic staff members for publications. DU has a strong Motivation system for Research activities.

4. DU uses appropriate plagiarism detection tools for both bachelor and master programmes.

Weak points:

1. There is no professor place in Economics.

2. DU don't use appropriate plagiarism detection tools for doctoral programme PhD final theses.

3. Website is mostly in Latvian, it is very important to develop it also in English.

4. Lack of motivation and initiative of teachers to get involved in outgoing teaching mobility programmes.

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

### **Analysis**

Daugavpils University (DU) is state founded and acts as an autonomous self-governing institution. DU aims at developing as academic traditions based, modern, and competitive study, scientific, and innovation centre. According to SAR DU accumulates, preserves, and maintains regional knowledge and contributes greatly to the regional development. DU is implementing three programmes in the study field of "Economics", - namely "Business and Financial Processes" (42311); "Smart Economics and Innovation" (47311), and "Economics" (51311). After examining the SAR and supplemented documents, as well as with the information obtained during the on-site visit, the experts have concluded that the study field is fully compliant with the requirement and meet the needs and the development trends of the society and national economy.

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Strong points:

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- 4.Lack of motivation and initiative of teachers to get involved in outgoing teaching mobility programmes.

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

### **Analysis**

1. According to SAR DU has developed a Quality ensuring policy and it is publicly available as it is a part of Daugavpils University development strategy for 2015-2020. Formal requirements have been met which are coordinated by the DU Study Council and the DU Study Quality Assessment Centre (CSQA). The quality management system has been introduced at both levels: university level (the internal control of the quality of study work is constantly performed also by the Department of Economics and the Faculty of Social Sciences) and study programme level. A positive tendency has been noted: study direction reports are produced every year, they are reviewed by the DU Study Council and approved by the Senate. The web page of the faculty includes publicly accessible information on topical information on the study process.

2. From the site visit interviews the experts found out that during the implementation of the study programmes of the field of ECONOMICS the opinions of the lecturers involved in the programmes are taken into account, - industry professionals, as well as employers and graduates of the programme, are regularly surveyed (surveys, analysis of some separate components of the programme,

involvement of employers and university graduates in the study council), which allows closer coordination of the programme content with the economic development trends and labour market needs. According to SAR the quality of study work is promoted by the participation of the graduates, they are surveyed and based on the survey results, the study programme content is reviewed and improved within study direction councils executed by study programme directors.

The CSQA at the end of each academic year organizes a student survey the results whereof provide information on the assessment of the study quality and related aspects. Student survey is available in the e-environment. The experts conclude that there could be a survey carried out right after each study course, when everything is still fresh in a student mind. Such timely surveys would help to assess the quality of each study course separately. Also, during the interviews students did not mention ever receiving feedback to what they have said in the annual surveys, apart from the SAR itself, which might be considered as a form of feedback, which is publicly available.

Alumni and employer survey questionnaires are elaborated as well.

All these activities contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programmes and study direction.

3. The procedures for the development and review of the study programmes of the study direction and the feedback mechanisms (including feedback to students, employers, and graduates) have been defined and they are logical. The DU collects and analyses the information (statistics) on study programmes of the study direction on a regular( year) basis and uses it to improve the study direction. The experts used interviews to formulate views on the improvements needed. The role of daily control has not been sufficiently assessed - for the improvement of the study process, exchange of experience, and raising of qualification, for example, lesson observation.

4. DU quality management is based on ESG Part 1 standards. The quality assurance system of study directions and programs are based on "Daugavpils University internal study quality assurance policy", which in 2021 was supplemented with several regulatory documents based on ESG Part 1 standard criteria, for example, "Daugavpils University study quality policy and study quality monitoring strategy ", " Procedure for ensuring the efficiency of the internal quality system of Daugavpils University studies ", guidelines" Implementation of internal quality management procedures of Daugavpils University ", etc.

Lecturers are provided with the necessary support to ensure the quality of study program implementation, for example, lecturers are offered to improve their professional competence in ESF development projects funded professional development courses ("Basics of developing e-learning materials and virtual study platforms", "Trends in the use of educational technologies", intelligence in education ", etc.). Support measures to improve understanding of study quality issues are organized by DU Study Quality Assessment Center.

One of the biggest challenges for DU in the implementation of ESG Part 1 standards is the systematic maintenance of the quality of study content and its renewal in the e-learning environment. In order to provide the necessary support to the academic staff, since 2020 DU has been awarded grants every year for updating or developing the study content in the e-learning environment MOODLE, based on the Procedure for Granting Grants for Transferring Research Findings to the Daugavpils University e-learning environment ", support seminars are organized for academic staff during the development of grants.

The internal quality assurance system of DU Studies is flexible enough to respond to non-standard situations, for example, to ensure the quality of the final / state examinations in the distance learning process. In the 2019/2020 academic year, "Procedures for the organization of final / state examinations remotely at Daugavpils University in the spring semester of the 2019/2020 academic year" were developed. 2020/2021.st.g. with the aim to eliminate the risks identified in the previous study year in the course of final / state examinations, the developed procedure before the winter

session was clarified and supplemented, taking into account the threats identified in the previous procedure.

### **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The DU collects and analyses the information on study programmes of the study direction on a regular (year) basis. Faculty of Social Sciences and Department of Economics have cooperation with employers and university graduates.

The experts can conclude, that the DU has established a quality policy and has developed and maintains a quality assurance system. It contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programmes and study direction.

#### **Strong points**

1. Extensive cooperation with employers (as visiting lecturers and interns, in programme management).
2. Involvement of industry professionals in the study process and cooperation with state and local government institutions, business structures and other organisations, which promotes the harmonization of the study programme content with the interests of employers and labour market requirements, purposefully linking academic and research tasks with practice.

#### **Weak points**

1. There is no evidence of a systematic approach to the internal control system, mentoring support for each academic staff course and control functions in daily tasks (adherence to lecture schedule, etc.).
2. Experts opinion is that in DU could be a survey right after each study course. Also, students did not mention ever receiving feedback on what they have said in the annual surveys.

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

#### **Analysis**

The DU has developed a system to determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study field and the relevant study programmes. Based on the information provided in SAR, every year the financial resources required for the implementation of the study programmes are approved by the Senate of the DU (p.44). The financial resources available for the implementation of the study direction are comprised of the state budget grant, tuition fees, other revenue and funds attracted through various projects financed by the European Union (EU) (Meeting with the Head of the Finance department). The DU has developed a system to determine the costs per student in each of the study programmes (Annex "Cost management"). The tuition fee per student is set in accordance with the income level of the region, thus for the professional master study programme and the doctoral study programme the tuition fee does not cover the whole cost, however, the difference is offset by other revenue and funds attracted through EU financed projects (Meeting with the Head of the Finance department).

With respect to the development of science and scientific research, the DU has developed a strong remuneration system for motivating the scientific contributions of the teaching staff. The research activities of the teaching staff are encouraged by a remuneration system for publications indexed in Web of Science or SCOPUS databases and the Hirsch index (SAR, p.44). The members of the teaching staff also receive a refund for expenses related to the preparation of publications (SAR, p.54). Furthermore, the DU offers grants to both the teaching staff and students that encourage scientific research or are specifically designed to motivate the teaching staff to improve the content

of Moodle platform (Meeting with HEI management, the academic staff, alumni).

The funds required to ensure the development of science within the study field “Economics” are obtained from the Ministry of Education and Science on the basis of the lecturers’ scientific achievements and indicators for the previous year (SAR, p.44). As the scientific research activity is continuously growing, the financial resources, which are required additionally to those obtained from the Ministry, are covered by the DU’s own revenue (Meeting with the Head of the Finance department).

A significant part of financial resources is comprised of funds attracted through EU financed projects that are invested in the content and technical modernisation of the study field, as well as the renewal of the teaching staff and the improvement of their professional competencies (SAR, p.44). The dependence on EU financed projects could be a cause for unpredictability in regards to the financial situation in future.

During the site visit, representatives from the DU introduced experts with premises, technologies and the Moodle platform. A wide range of databases, e-resources and books are available for the students (Tour of the facilities; Meeting with students; SAR, p.47-50). Ten different electronic resources are provided (Meeting with library staff; SAR, p.48), and databases can be accessed remotely (Meeting with library staff; Meeting with students), which is of particular importance to students studying remotely due to Covid-19 restrictions. According to the library staff, the database sessions have increased during the last year as during the remote studies students use databases more often. The DU provided statistics for the overall amount of database sessions for the last study year (2019/2020), which comprised 13230 sessions for the EBSCO database, 4461 sessions for the SCOPUS database and 5885 full-text requests for the ScienceDirect database (Additional information). The library keeps the faculty informed about the latest acquired books and opportunities to connect to a new database - the library management prepares this information for the homepage of the library and the main university’s homepage and also sends this information to all deans that further inform study programme directors who in turn inform the teaching staff and students (Meeting with library staff). The students also have remote access to IBM SPSS Statistics (Statistical Product and Service Solutions), which is of particular importance during the remote studies as it is a time-intensive system (Meeting with students).

Based on information in SAR, the DU has developed a systematic approach to selecting valuable resources for study programmes - the study councils agree on the required literature and submit a list to the Vice-Rector for Studies and the Vice-Rector for Science for approval. The list then should be approved also by the Budgetary Commission of the DU (SAR, p.46).

The DU has a procedure for election to academic positions, which has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Cabinet Regulation Nr. 391, which have lost their power with Changes in the Law of Higher Education Institutions, which were adopted on 05.11.2020. Thus the current procedure stands to be amended in accordance with the aforementioned changes that came into effect on 01.01.2021. The requirements for full-time elected personnel as determined in the current procedure are in line with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and include both academic and teaching qualifications (Regulation on electing to academic positions at Daugavpils University).

Out of 65 lecturers that are involved in the implementation of the study field “Economics”, 36 or 55% are elected lecturers, while 25 or 37% are guest lecturers (SAR, p.56). The emphasis on professional study courses has led to involving practitioners and persons employed in the respective industry and inviting them to join the implementation of the study programmes (Meeting with the academic staff). Moreover, a significant part of the lecturers are graduates of the study programmes within the study field “Economics”, particularly three doctoral graduates within the reporting period have integrated their doctoral studies into the academic environment. Thus the DU aims for attracting and involving highly skilled and experienced teaching staff, however, in respect to not-elected personnel, there is no procedure developed that would determine a systematic approach for

attracting academic personnel.

The DU has also developed a procedure for the assessment of the scientific activity of the teaching staff. However, there is no assessment procedure that would determine a system of evaluation according to the criteria for scientific, artistic, pedagogical qualification and organizational competence. The pedagogical competencies of the academic personnel are assessed via the peer-review evaluations and the annual student surveys (Meeting with the academic staff), however, there is no clear procedure for how these evaluations are carried out and how are they taken into account.

Thus several procedures that would ensure a more systematic and transparent approach are missing, however, at the time of assessment an extensive revision and improvement of the quality system was underway and new documents were prepared (Meeting with members of the group responsible for the preparation of Self-Assessment report and the person responsible for QA management system).

The academic and research load of the teaching staff is determined in accordance with the "Procedure of the accounting of the amount of work of the academic staff at Daugavpils University" (SAR, p.58). The workload depends on whether a member of the academic staff is more involved with the faculty, which involves more work spent for the study process, or the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, which involves more research work. Mostly the teaching staff members are satisfied with their workload (Meeting with the academic staff).

In order to improve the academic personnel's professional and didactic competencies, the DU provides various professional development courses and opportunities to participate in outgoing mobility that involves training and experience exchange at the foreign co-operation educational institutions (SAR, p.52). The DU is also implementing the European Social Fund project Nr.8.2.2.0/18/A/022 "Strengthening the Professional Competency of Daugavpils University Academic Staff in the Areas of Strategic Specialization" that allows the teaching staff members to improve their qualification through a 200-hour long internship in a company corresponding to the specialization (SAR, p.53). The teaching staff also has a strong connection with the industry as several of the staff members are also entrepreneurs or holding various positions in companies located in the region (Meeting with the academic staff). This ensures their access to the latest innovations, practical methods and demands of the labour market, which is of importance when implementing a professional study programme.

There are several international visiting lecturers involved in the study field's implementation (Meeting with the academic staff; Annex "Docents incoming outgoing mobility"). The DU has defined challenges pertaining to incoming and outgoing mobility of the teaching staff, which include foreign host institution burdensome administrative processes, fitting in the outgoing mobility in the already established lecture schedule and English knowledge of the teaching staff. The outgoing mobility by the teaching staff is mainly used for training purposes, rather than teaching that would bring added value to the implementation of the study process and the study quality. In order to motivate the teaching staff to participate in the outgoing mobility, English language courses for B2 and C1 level are organized for the teaching staff (Meeting with the HEI management).

A support structure has been developed with respect to incoming and outgoing student mobility. Foreign student support includes ERASMUS + Project Coordinator, the Chief Specialist in International and Public Relations Department and the staff of the Faculty Dean's Offices. Moreover, foreign exchange students are offered free Latvian language courses, outside of the study programme (SAR, p.59; Meeting with the Study department methodologist). The outgoing student experience is also evaluated as smooth and successful (Meeting with students). The outgoing mobility for students is organized according to the procedure "Regulations on University of Daugavpils Students' Application for Studies, Program Conditions, Selection Procedures and Academic Recognition of the Acquired Study Courses in the EU Program Erasmus+" that includes the development of an individual work plan and coordination of the study courses in cooperation

with the study programme director. If the student chooses a study course that is not recognised, then the student is provided with study course support materials and consultations via remote learning (SAR, p.59).

The support for remote learning students includes not only remotely accessible databases, such a time-intensive system as IBM SPSS Statistics (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) and Moodle platform with course information and content, but also professors are freely accessible for consultations (Tour around facilities; Meeting with students). The students particularly appreciated the remote access to databases and the approachability of the teaching staff that communicate in a timely and efficient manner (Meeting with students).

Student support during the study process is provided by the administrative staff and faculty members and students have the additional benefit to make use of the Career Initiative and Support Centre, as well as Centre for Professional Development, where students are able to receive career consultations, psychological support (SAR, p.60) and consultations in respect to entrepreneurship (Meeting with members of the group responsible for the preparation of SAR). Students themselves, however, do not extensively use the opportunities provided by the support centres, as those participating in the meeting indicated that there has not been a need for them to visit the centre for career consultation as most of them already are employed (Meeting with students). This might also indicate that the support centre's activities are not relevant or not advertised enough among the student population. From the viewpoint of students with special learning needs and disabilities, general anxiety and stress and time management difficulties, it is important to ensure appropriate psychological support, thus it might be beneficial to evaluate the support provided by these centres and ensure that students are informed about the available support possibilities.

Within the framework of a project financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the DU has adapted its environment to facilitate the study process for persons with disabilities (movement, visual and hearing disorders) – the classrooms are accessible for persons who use a wheelchair and information is made available to persons with visual or hearing impairments. Moreover, the DU has established support for students with small children – a playroom and a nursery is made available for parents that study (Tour around facilities; SAR, p.60-61).

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

Based on SAR and information received during the site visit, there are appropriate financial, pedagogical, material and electronic resources available for the implementation of the study field. The procedures pertaining to the academic personnel's evaluation, attraction and their general outgoing mobility trends could be reviewed, meanwhile, the infrastructure, financial, material and electronic resources ensure the quality of the implementation of the study field.

### **Strengths**

1. There is a strong remuneration system in place for motivating the scientific contributions of the teaching staff and students.
2. Remote access is ensured for databases, software and Moodle platform, which is of great importance during remote studies.
3. The environment of the DU has been adapted to facilitate the study process for persons with disabilities and students with small children.

### **Weaknesses**

1. Procedure for assessment of the academic personnel's pedagogical competencies has not been developed and the current system of assessment is not transparent.
2. Academic Personnel Policy that would involve criteria for attracting not-elected personnel has not been developed.
3. The outgoing mobility by the teaching staff is mainly used for training purposes, rather than

teaching.

4. A significant part of financial resources is comprised of funds attracted through EU financed projects and the dependence on the availability of EU financed projects could lead to an unstable financial position.

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

##### **Analysis**

There is extensive evidence (SAR p.60-65), interviews with academic staff) that fields of scientific research in the study field and within-study direction »Economy« comply with the development aims of the DU, which is to provide integrated and comprehensive practice-based theoretical knowledge in the field of economics and a set of practical skills in order to train students to be professionals in their field, promoting students' competitiveness in today's labour market, developing their abilities and encouraging lifelong learning (SAR, p. 19-21). There is a synergy between different units at DU, especially the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Centre for Social Research and the Centre for Sustainable Education, which means strengthening the scientific research potential of the study field. Scientific research done by academic staff involved in the programmes of DU is mostly related to the conducted study courses carried out in economics, management, finance, and business and is relevant to the study field. The DU also supports interdisciplinary research carried out in the fields of psychology, management, law, education, and science, and in several cases, master and doctoral students are included (SAR, p. 64). DU issues scientific journals - "Regional Review", "Social Sciences Bulletin" and "Proceedings of the DU International Scientific Conference", which are included in internationally cited databases. DU is strongly involved in several internal, as well as national, and international research projects - 3 HORIZON 2020 projects, about 60 international projects of ESF, ERDF, COST, INTERREG and of about 30 Latvian national projects, and research topics are determined by those projects, as well as by research interests of the academic staff in connection with economical and social challenges in the environment. The fields of scientific research are relevant to the industry. Although not much evidence of applied projects and knowledge transfer for companies and other institutions was seen (interview with employers, interview with management), the connection of the business community with DU is mostly evident in internships, in engaging experts from the business environment to become guest lecturers and in providing internships. Not much other formal connection could be seen.

The Faculty of Social Sciences organizes the annual scientific-practical conference "Social Sciences for Regional Development in cooperation with the DU Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences.

During the reporting period, academic staff involved in the study field "Economics" produced more than 400 scientific publications, half of them were included in the SCOPUS, WoS, and Thomson Reuters, and 23 academic staff have h-index in SCOPUS and WoS databases. The academic staff also participated in more than 500 international scientific conferences, and several projects, they are members of program boards for conferences and journals, projects leaders, etc., many are experts of the Latvian Science Council in social sciences (Business and Economics, Psychology, Educational Sciences, Law).

The support system for research work is very complex and diversified, including tangible and intangible aspects and motivates academic staff greatly. This could be seen from the results in the documentation (annex list of research, annex list of publications) and especially from the interviews with them, as they expressed satisfaction with working conditions and the possibility of conducting their research. One of the innovative aspects of this system is the annual DU festive event "Annual Prize for Science.

The fields of scientific research in the doctoral study programme "Economics" comply with the development aims of the DU, and they are potentially related to the problems of economic growth on different levels and empirical results can make a significant contribution to the development of

the industry in the country. The researchers that are implemented in the doctoral theses elaborated at DU are dedicated to the research of "Regional economics" where 18 doctoral theses were defended since last accreditation and »Finance and credit" where 3 doctoral theses were defended since last accreditation (SAR, p. 19-20). The research topics are grounded and determined by the most important problems of the regions connected with national and world economics, topics relate to solvency and the issues of bank loan portfolio formation in Latvia, management of company assets, and other issues, important for the financial development of the country and its impact on the economics.

In the accreditation period, several articles published in Scopus or WoS indexed journals were prepared in co-operation with academic staff, doctoral supervisors, and seven doctoral students.

The connection between research activity and study programmes in individual subjects is provided and effective. Given that DU enables research activity on many domestic in international projects and the involvement of a certain number of academic staff in the local business environment. As we could see at the interview with academic staff and in the documentation (SAR p. 65-66) teachers regularly prepare research summaries for the conference in the framework of dissemination of research results - reports at scientific and practical conferences, seminars, conducting study courses, supervising documents, for study support materials. It is positive that many projects involve cooperation between teachers of different professions, thus ensuring interdisciplinarity. As can be seen from interviews with teachers, they use the results of recent research and the research of colleagues in teaching study programmes, provide references to them and introduce their integration with other international research. Previous subjects that include new research findings are also listed in documentation such as "Smart Economics and Innovation" (SAR, p. 66, curriculum appendix). The connection with the industry was ensured mainly through informal cooperation of employers with DU, by the work of some teachers in various committees in the business environment, by providing internships for students, and by involving experts from practice in the implementation of subjects. However, there are no concrete application projects for the business sector.

The participation of students in research work is also well organized. In addition, they receive the results of the latest research of their teachers within individual subjects, so the researchers were also involved in the preparation of their diploma, master's, and doctoral theses. As volunteers, they can participate in various researches, in various events, such as in the framework of the project Interreg (2014-2020) Latvia Lithuania - students are so actively involved in several events, so they developed tools for the project in other tools. Doctoral students also transfer their research experience into the findings of their research topics in the subjects for the masters and undergraduate program. Also, in the promotion of research events, DU allows students to get involved in international events and thus do independent work within the study subject, which must be done during certain events.

Since the last accreditation, the DU has seen great progress in the field of international coping in the field of scientific research. Many teachers are active in various international events, ranging from active participation in partner universities, participation in international scientific conferences and seminars, participation in various program committees of conferences and journals (for example in the USA, Malaysia, Serbia, Macedonia, Lithuania, Poland, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Spain, Turkey, etc. - SAR, p. 66-67, Annex)), networks and consortia, reviewing scientific papers and monographs, to the joint publication of scientific articles and other scientific work. They also participate in many important international projects, most of which they carry out together with long-term partners from abroad. The documentation (SAR, p. 66-69, annex) provides, in an appropriate and detailed manner, concrete examples, participants, and events related to international scientific and research cooperation. The experts were able to see this in conversations with management and teachers, who emphasize the importance of participating in international research projects and programs to gain experience and understanding of educational, scientific, and

economic processes in different countries and the impact on lecturer skills and improvements in the study process. The result of such cooperation is also favourable for the included business environment, as the participating business entities receive practical and scientifically based proposals and development for the further progress of their activities.

Research cooperation at the international level usually takes place in the framework of various cooperation projects with partners from abroad, with the areas of sustainable development and territorial development aspects being highlighted. Teachers are also actively involved in actively addressing current social and economic challenges by participating in projects, preparing reports and publications. In its efforts for international cooperation on DU projects, it is also achieving greater success, such as the EUROKEY project no. 2017-1-TR01-KA202-046115 of the Erasmus + Lifelong Learning Program K2 strategic partnership. The goal of international cooperation is also reflected in the strategic plans, which show a further deepening of good cooperation with existing partners from the UK, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Poland, Estonia, and Lithuania, highlighting cooperation with three universities: Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania), University of Huddersfield (United Kingdom) and The Faculty of Management and Command of the War Studies University (Poland). (SAR, p 69). The main focus of the future collaboration will be on joint publications in publications included in SCOPUS and WoS. The documents also mention the intention to organize a joint doctoral school, but in conversations with the management it turned out that no more concrete preparations are being made in this direction. To improve the research work of students, where doctoral students are already relatively actively involved in international projects, DU plans several activities that would connect students in international project groups, including with other students.

At DU, they have developed a heterogeneous motivational system for the promotion and development of teachers' research work, which largely focuses on quality and achievements in research work, not just participation. Thus, in the annual reporting, teachers submit a report on their achievements in scientific and creative work, various projects, with all the information on participation in scientific seminars and conferences, and publications. For this purpose, DU has established a procedure for evaluating the scientific activity of teachers (annex - procedure). In addition to reimbursement for conferences and other events, teachers receive reimbursement for costs related to the preparation of their publications and a special payment for the Hirsch citation index in the SCOPUS and/or Web of Science databases. The best research ideas and projects at DU are also awarded through a call for research projects, where current and high-quality projects are funded, for which teachers, researchers, and doctoral students can apply. (annex - List of scientific peer-reviewed publications of DU academic staff related to study programs in the field of study "Economics" OD 2013-2020).

Besides that, the Faculty of Social Sciences has several organisational units supporting research, among others Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences and is also involved in DU Technology transfer office, but knowledge transfer to the business community is not strong. The publishing activity at DU is highly developed, they publish numerous magazines and anthologies, which are classified in various databases.

As can be seen from the detailed report on student participation in research (SAR 70-71) and as shown in interviews with teachers and students, students of all levels have several different opportunities to participate in projects and events invited by teachers. By participating in projects, they can also perform a certain part of individual obligations in a subject in certain subjects. The detailed list of joint publications between teachers and students shows that first, second, and third-level students participate in the preparation of joint articles in the period since the last accreditation with teachers.

The list of awarded projects at the DU internal project competition also shows the participation of masters and doctoral students.

Mechanisms for promoting the involvement of students in research work are also evident in the

participation of graduates and doctoral students who participate in the study process as guest lecturers. They also participate in the training of young generations in the region within the implementation of the School of Young Entrepreneurs, organized in the region by the Department of Economics at DU.

DU also organizes regular international scientific conferences and organizes student working groups for master and doctoral students. DU also ensures that students regularly participate in financial and promotional activities at various business forums and other events that they attend at the invitation of teachers.

In recent years, many innovative solutions have emerged in DU's study processes in the field of economics. After the last accreditation, DU recognized that increasing smart specialization is entering the social sciences, which is related to many future professions in the field of business and economics, which require certain combinations of knowledge. Based on current and future labour market needs, employers' expectations, and scientific findings, DU adjusted the structure and content of study programs and harmonized them with the renewed professional standards (The professional standard of the enterprise manager approved by the Vocational Education and Employment Tripartite Cooperation Sub -Council on 18 September 2019 and the professional standard of the financier approved on 16 October 2018). Thus, a new Professional Bachelor Study Programme "Business and financial processes" was developed in the study field "Economics" according to professional qualifications - "Finance" and "Business management". DU also developed a Professional Master Study Programme "Smart Economics and Innovation" according to the professional qualifications - "Financial Analyst" and "Economist".

The greatest emphasis of the changes is mainly on the practical orientation and current knowledge, competencies, methods, and tools for work in the profession in the areas covered by individual study programmes. The decision to change the academic study programme to a professional programme was well-received both among students (interviews with students) and among employers (interviews with employers), some of whom participated in the renewal of content or participate in the implementation of a certain part of the programme as practitioners or guest lecturers.

It is important for students and their ability to understand practical solutions in society and the business environment that the renewed programmes include practitioners with practical work experience in both finance and business.

Changes have also been introduced in the marketing of these programmes, where DU teachers and students participate and which include participation in career weeks, classroom visits to potential students, the annual Young Entrepreneurs School, as part of the events at the annual "Science Night", "Science Festival" and open days. All these changes can have a positive impact on the promotion of DU and programmes in the field of economics in terms of the relevant interest of future students and are in line with the current approaches of competing universities and HEI.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

Fields of scientific research in the study field and within-study field »Economy« comply with the development aims of the DU, there is a strong synergy between different units at DU, supporting research activities and interdisciplinary research. Scientific research done by academic staff is mostly related to the conducted study courses and is efficient and integrated into the study process in several ways. The support system for research work is very complex and diversified, including tangible and intangible aspects and motivates academic staff greatly. Mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research are efficient. They are well-functioning and efficient. There is a significant improvement in scientific publications production. Applied projects and knowledge transfer for the business community are modest. International cooperation in the field of scientific research and/or artistic creation within the study direction and the relevant study programmes is ensured and improved in a target-oriented manner, DU has long-term cooperation

with universities abroad, working on projects and joint publications. DU has several effective mechanisms to promote the involvement of the students of all levels in scientific research, mostly involving them to work on projects, events, conferences and joint publications with academic staff. Innovative solutions in the study process were implemented by renovating study programmes and adapting them to professional standards.

#### Strengths

1. Notable progress in scientific publications and international research cooperation.
2. DU has a strong Motivation system for Research activities, including a financial motivation system for indexed publications and the Hirsch index.
3. The contribution of each academic personnel member to science is identified, evaluated and revised once a year.
4. Extensive participation in EU funded projects that offer additional resources for the improvement of the study quality in the study direction.

#### Weaknesses

1. Weak applied research and knowledge transfer.

## 5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

### Analysis

DU cooperates with the institutions from Latvia and abroad, mainly with employers and higher education institutions. DU has signed many agreements with higher education institutions, DU has cooperation partners in Bulgaria, Poland and other countries. DU put emphasis on work on bilateral agreements and this does not only apply to participation in Promotion Councils, for example, but Latvia University of Agriculture and Liepāja University also conduct joint scientific research. DU also conducts joint scientific research with RISEBA University. The main advantage is the exchange of experience and knowledge development. DU also invites foreign lecturers, several foreign professors are involved in the implementation of the study direction “Economics” from Bulgaria, Belarus, Poland, Turkey etc.

The cooperation partners are selected in view of the specific features of the study direction and the relevant study programmes also taking into account the specific needs and opportunities of the college's target audience and students. DU has strong cooperation with institutions, for example, DU organizes lecturers-discussions with the experts of the Bank of Latvia and joint events with the Junior Achievement Latvia.

DU also has very good cooperation with Daugavpils municipality in different kind of matters (provide scholarships, motivation awards etc.). DU emphasizes its location in the Latgale region as an advantage. Municipalities and state institutions are also potential employers for graduates.

Cooperation with employers definitely contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study direction and the relevant study programmes, employers are involved both as teaching staff and in the development of the study programme. Co-operation with employers is organized at several levels representing both public and private sector. For example, employers have been invited as guest lecturers in the bachelor programme Economics. Employers also asked for more practical focus in the studies, it was one of the reasons to requalified academic programmes to vocational programmes. In addition, employers may offer themes for doctoral student theses. Employers also have the possibility to get acquainted with the Self-assessment report which was submitted to the Study Direction Council for approval, respectively the employers are members of this council. This underlines DU close cooperation with employers, which is also an advantage of a small region. DU also cooperates with Daugavpils Business Incubator, mainly students visit Daugavpils Business Incubator. There are graduates who continue to work at Daugavpils Business Incubator after their studies. It underlines DU focus on studies with the needs of the labour market. There also employers among Master programme students. Cooperation with

employers is also in the opposite direction – the lecturers of the study programme are involved in projects initiated by the employers. DU has developed a system and procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad within the study field however incoming mobility is low. Regarding the outgoing mobility, DU teaching staff use the Erasmus+ programme for training, not for teaching which would undoubtedly have more added value. In order to increase teachers outgoing and students incoming mobility, DU organizes an English language course for teaching staff. DU students like to use opportunities provided by the Erasmus+ programme and to study abroad, at the same time foreign students do not widely use this opportunity and according to SAR quite rarely went to DU within the framework of Erasmus + programme mobilities.

Although practice to invite teaching staff from abroad for the full course is not widely used, DU uses the opportunity to invite many guest lectures – employers, lecturers from other higher education institutions, also foreign lecturers. According to SAR, during the reporting period, the number of guest lecturers – industry professionals, who participate in the implementation of the study programme, has been increasing. It was also confirmed by the students, they evaluated this practice as very valuable.

There is a common system for the provision of traineeships and the organisation thereof has been developed within the study field.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The university has established good cooperation with employers, higher education institutions both in Latvia and abroad, which is definitely a purposeful and systematic result of several years of work. In addition, the collaboration is diverse and appreciated by students. However, mobility opportunities have not been sufficiently used, both for incoming and outgoing mobility. This also applies to teachers participating in Erasmus mobility for training not for teaching losing the potential to obtain additional and valuable experience. All procedures are efficient and contribute to the improvement of the study process.

Strong points:

- 1.Strong cooperation with employers, which is realized in various forms of cooperation.
- 2.Close and extensive cooperation with other universities, which makes a great contribution to the study process.

Weakness:

- 1.Teachers make little use of the Erasmus+ program to give lectures abroad.
- 2.The number of foreign students is small, mainly because the number of study programs in English is limited.

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

### **Analysis**

The main recommendations expressed by the expert's panel (On March 10, 2012) were as follows:

- strengthening of professional orientation in the study programmes of the direction;
- reducing the fragmentation of the study courses;
- more active use of Moodle;
- expanding research at the international level;
- more intensive involvement of students in research work within the aims of the study programme;
- more active participation in international mobility, incl. ERASMUS + projects;
- increasing the number of lecturers' scientific publications in internationally recognized peer-reviewed scientific journals;

-improvement of the resources of the library.

The recommendations from the previous accreditation were implemented, some of them were completed immediately after the accreditation. Some of the long-term recommendations ought to have a continuous process of improvement.

Two study programmes - Smart Economics and Innovations; Business and Financial Processes, - were licensed in 2019 and 2020. The recommendations in the respective reports contained short term and long term recommendations. Overall, DU implemented the following main recommendations expressed by the accreditation expert panel as well as the recommendations provided by the expert panels from two study programmes licensing activities :

- The first improvement of the study field is related to the strengthening of professional orientation in the study programmes of the field. By now DU has Professional bachelor and master programmes in Economics, great attention was paid also to the mutual integration of the study courses.

- In the study, process the entrepreneurs are invited as the visiting staff in order to create a topical study program and include the practical needs of entrepreneurs.

- Significant work has been carried out to provide students with a broader insight into the overall development of the study programme because only a generally binding study program will attract new students.

- The descriptions of study courses are updated so that the information sources reflect the latest trends in the field, the descriptions of study courses now contain literature sources that are understandable in the languages of the programme - in English for English students.

- The staff makes a comparison with other study programs, as a result of which new findings emerge, which are taken into account in the study programme.

- The internal quality assurance system of the existing studies has been improved.

- The number of support materials for the study courses are available in the Moodle system is gradually increasing. The study materials placed in the Moodle environment are very diverse and include video collections, recordings of Zoom classes, worksheets of lecturers' publications, presentations, research reports, etc.

- The number of visiting lectures is increasing. The international visiting lecturers came from Germany, Bulgaria, Poland, Lithuania, Turkey, Belarus and Tajikistan.

- During the reporting period, the number of publications in internationally recognized peer-reviewed scientific journals indexed in SCOPUS and WoS has significantly increased (up to 70%). DU has strong Scientific activities motivation system. Active work has been done to improve the collections of the DU library (e-resources, books in Latvian and English).

DU staff is working also on the implementation of the long term recommendations:

- Still, DU needs to pay more attention to more active participation in international mobility (for staff it is a teaching activity), incl. the ERASMUS+ projects. The staff should improve their English language skills, the university needs to attract more foreign students. DU also need to more intensively involve students in research activities during their studies.

- It is necessary to continue to improve the internal quality assurance system of the existing studies.

- It is necessary to develop a long-term strategy for cooperation with external partners in order to attract resources and competence for the development of the study program (participation in projects, their implementation, research, etc.).

Thus most of the short term recommendations are implemented, but some of the long-term recommendations ought to have a continuous process of improvement.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The recommendations from the previous accreditation (on March 10, 2012) were implemented, some of them completed immediately after the accreditation. The expert panel of 2012 emphasized

the need to strengthen students research skills and set high expanding research at the international level; more active participation in international mobility, incl. ERASMUS. The same situation is with the short term and long term recommendations from the licencing process of the two study programmes. Most of the short term recommendations are implemented, but some of the long-term recommendations ought to have a continuous process of improvement.

#### Strengths

1. The following recommendations were fully implemented, - strengthening of professional orientation in the study programmes of the direction; increasing the number of lecturers' scientific publications in internationally recognized peer-reviewed scientific journals; improvement of the resources of the library; reducing the fragmentation of the study courses; more active use of Moodle.
2. Involvement of entrepreneurs as visiting lecturers in order to create a topical study programme.
3. The descriptions of study courses are updated so that the information sources reflect the latest trends in the field, the descriptions of study courses now contain literature sources that are understandable in the languages of the programme - in English for the English language study groups.
4. DU staff regularly assess and makes comparisons with other study programmes, as a result of which new findings emerge, which are taken into account to improve the quality of the study programmes in the study field.

#### Weaknesses

1. Some long term recommendations are not sufficiently implemented, such as low participation in international mobility (for staff it is a teaching activity), incl. ERASMUS+ projects; insufficient English language skills of the staff; insufficient student involvement in research work during their study time.
2. DU lacks a long-term strategy for cooperation with external partners.
3. DU has a small number of foreign students.

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

- 1 Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** DU ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems, which is justified by the prospective evaluation of the study direction and study programmes taking into account the tasks of Latvia in the implementation of the common strategies of the European Union as of May 16, 2020.  
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF DAUGAVPILS UNIVERSITY, 2015-2020.
- 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  
**Justification:** DU has established the Quality ensuring policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education is stated as a part of the Daugavpils University development strategy for 2015-2020).
- 3 1.2. A mechanism for the development and internal approval of the study programmes of the higher education institution/ college, as well as the supervision of their performance and periodic inspection thereof has been developed.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** In the DU there is present the mechanism for the development, improvement and monitoring of the study programmes, which is confirmed by the “Regulation on Studies at Daugavpils University” and “Regulation on Study Direction and Programme at Daugavpils University”.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of students’ results, which enable reassurance of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, have been developed and made public, which is justified by publicly available “Regulation on Studies at Daugavpils University”, and the description of study courses.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** In the DU there have been developed internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the quality of their work, which is confirmed by the "Regulation on elections to academic positions in Daugavpils University" and "Procedure of assessing the scientific activity of Daugavpils University academic staff".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Various surveys like surveys of internship places, student surveys on the quality of the study program and process, surveys of alumni and employer satisfaction as interviews with employers ensure 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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** DU constantly ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing quality assurance systems, which is confirmed by "DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF DAUGAVPILS UNIVERSITY", 2015-2020. Quality Management System.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The experts were provided with the "List of cooperation agreements for study field „Economics” outlining cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.

During the visit it became evident that cooperation is also present in the development of study programs; study process improvement and the development of scientific research; Internship placements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The conclusions were based on the CVs of teaching staff received prior to the visit as well as the List of the publications, patents, and artistic creations of the teaching staff over the reporting period presented to the expert panel justifies compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof. Information received during the visit also confirms full compliance.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** DU presented the document named "Overview of the implementation of the provided recommendations provided by the DU", which shows shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction and the implementation of the provided recommendations.

## 8. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Develop the English version of the website containing the same information as in Latvian.  |
| 2. Consider developing a systematic approach to the internal control system implementing a survey at the end of each study course and informing students on actions taken after receiving their feedback.   |
| 3. With the support of existing organizational units at DU design ways of direct cooperation with the business community for the implementation of applied research and knowledge transfer, so that more students will be able to participate in the research process, with the help of their teachers.   |
| 4. Consider using various possibilities to attract foreign students to study at DU.   |
| 5. Consider enhancing DU activities for active participation in international mobility ( for staff it is a teaching activity), incl. ERASMUS + projects.  |
| 6. Increase English language skills among teaching staff  |
| 7. Use more possibilities to attract foreign students within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme.   |
| 8. Consider motivating teaching staff to use outgoing mobility not mainly for training purposes, but also for teaching purposes.  |
| 9. Consider possibilities to diversify the sources of financial income that would lower the risk of an unstable financial situation due to no availability of EU financed projects. Prepare a contingency plan for the possible case of reduced availability of EU financed projects and the subsequent possible reduction in the financial income from EU financed projects. |

### Long-term recommendations

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Consider creating own professor position in the study field of "Economics".                        |
| 2. Consider using appropriate plagiarism detection tools for the doctoral programme PhD final theses. |

3. Develop a criteria-based procedure for transparent assessment of the academic personnel's pedagogical competencies.

4. Develop Academic Personnel Policy that would involve criteria for attracting not-elected personnel.

5. Motivate the teaching staff to participate in outgoing mobility that involves them teaching in foreign educational institutions.

6. Consider more intensive involvement of students in research work within the aims of the study programme.

## II. "Business and Financial Processes" ASSESSMENT

### II. "Business and Financial Processes" ASSESSMENT

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

The aim of the "PBSP "Business and Financial Processes" (42311)" study program is to provide DU matriculated students with a broad and comprehensive practice-based theoretical knowledge and practical skills in the field of business and finance, as well as to provide in-depth foreign language learning opportunities in order to meet specific professional standards (financier - PS 117 and business manager - PS-115) and the knowledge basis and professional competence corresponding to professional higher education of the second level. The acquired qualification level corresponds to the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF)) 6 and also takes into consideration recent regional developments, market requirements as well as relevant and valid professional standards "Business Manager" PS-115 and "Financier" PS-117. Graduates are awarded Bachelor's degree in Economics with the qualification of a financier or a business manager being also able to continue their education at other higher education institutions to obtain a Master degree. The study program has several main objectives outlining necessary knowledge, skills and competencies formulated in accordance with level 6 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework level. Objectives, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme are clearly defined. A strong impact is placed on the professional aspect of the program, which is highly valued by students and employers. During the visit, employers emphasized that the programme is tailored to the demand of the current labour market and situation in the Latgale region.

The admission of students is based on regulatory laws and legislation (Article 46 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 846 (as of 10 October 2006) "Regulations regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes". Prerequisites for admission to the program are transparent and ensure the entrants of the program with the appropriate level of the knowledge and skills, which is required to achieve the learning outcomes of the program, admission rules are clearly defined and publicly available at the website of the DU. <https://du.lv/ieskaties-augstskola/skoleniem/uznemsana/>

Admission requirements for foreign students are publicly available at the DU website: [https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ENG-4\\_uznem\\_not\\_pilna\\_laika\\_studijam\\_arvalstniekiem\\_2021.pdf](https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ENG-4_uznem_not_pilna_laika_studijam_arvalstniekiem_2021.pdf). Foreign applicants have to pass the English language proficiency test in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 846 "Regulations Regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes". Winners of the 1st-3rd degree of the Latvian National Student Scientific Conferences in sections of Economics and Entrepreneurship have certain advantages. These applicants receive a state-funded place without competition. Also, holders of certificates of DU "School of Young Entrepreneurs", "Science School" and "JA-YE Latvija" get additional points and

priority on applying for the PBSP “Business and Financial Processes”.

Studies are conducted in the national language and in the English language in full (4 years) and part-time (5 years) forms.

The data presented to the experts’ panel shows a decline in the number of enrolled students from 90 in the 2013/2014 academic year till 50 for the 2019/2020 academic year, while the number of graduates remains in the range of 10-20 per year. The high drop-out rate is mainly related to financial problems arising during the studies process resulting in student’s inability to pay for studies, this was also mentioned in the interviews with the representatives of the DU during the site visit. During the meeting students also claimed that COVID-19 had a strong personal and academic impact on studies resulting in a high dropout rate.

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

In general, it can be concluded the name of the study programme PBSP “Business and Financial Processes” and the professional qualifications “Business Manager” PS-115 and “Financier” PS-117 to be acquired, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are logically interrelated. The study programme code and the degree awarded complies with the Classification of Latvian Education.

Strengths:

1.The program structure, aims, tasks and learning outcomes are aiming to contribute to the recent developments of the region and the demand of the labour market.

Weaknesses: not observed

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

### **Analysis**

PBSP “Business and Financial Processes” is developed in accordance with the Cabinet Regulations No. 512 Regulations on the state standard of the second level of professional higher education. The study process is organized in compliance with the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the Regulations on Studies of DU and other relevant regulatory documents.

The programme gives wide knowledge of modern business and finances with a strong emphasis on the needs of the EU and regional labour market. Close alignment with the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 aiming to increase competitiveness and productivity of the region in line with the “UN Sustainable Development Goals” is also notable. Programme as aiming to contribute to the sustainable development of the region by education specialists with good entrepreneurship skills and a good understanding of contemporary economics.

The aim, task and learning outcomes of the study programme correspond to the sixth EQF level (Cabinet Regulation No. 322 “Regulations on the Classification of Latvian Education”) providing the qualification of „Financier” (profession code - PS-117) or “Business manager” (profession code - PS-115). The content of the program is developed in close cooperation with alumni, employers and all relevant groups of stakeholders. The choice of specialization study courses is made only in the second year of studies enabling students to properly assess their interests, abilities, and needs.

The programme comprises 120 CP in total. The programme consists of general education study courses, industry theoretical basic study courses and information technology study courses, industry professional specialization study courses and elective courses (in line with Cabinet regulations No. 512, par.33) in accordance with the selected specialization, ensuring a balance between elective and mandatory courses. Knowledge and competencies are assessed on the 10-point scale in the form of graded tests and examination. At the end of the course, the Bachelor thesis is defended. As the programme is offered also in English the DU is planning to offer internship for those students attracting various employers of the region.

During the study period, students have two internships in the form of an introductory internship (8CP) and a specialization internship. (12CP). The first one gives students an impression of the modern business processes and gets more information for the preparation of a Bachelor thesis. While the specialization internship enables students to take an active part in the work of the selected company or organization, try various jobs and different positions.

Content of courses ensures the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. During all courses, students obtain relevant knowledge and skills necessary for the Bachelor degree and professional qualifications, also developing critical thinking, team building and other soft skills vital for entering the modern labour market. Experts would recommend to update the "Compulsory reading list" for some subjects taught during the course to make sure that the most recent developments and achievements in the study field are considered: Entrepreneurship marketing course - the latest recommended textbook is of the year 2013, Project elaboration and management systems I - the year 2009, BA International environment and globalization I: International geopolitics and economics - the most recent literature are the dated 2018, however it is referred to the "statistical portrait of the European Union 2014". It is also recommended to include books in English into the compulsory reading list for the "Legal regulation of Business" in order to make the course accessible for foreign or exchange students.

The tight relation of the program with the practical field is highly valued by all stakeholders. Courses are relevant and constantly updated, implementing various modern study methods like lectures, gaming, case studies, team building, tests, quizzes and puzzles, panel discussions, independent work and research etc. encouraging students to be involved in discussions, sharing their ideas and taking an active part in the learning process. During their studies, students can use the library and all available scientific databases, get feedback via Moodle or ask teaching staff for additional consultations, which are always on request and can also be arranged via Zoom.

Programme is held in high esteem by employers which were also confirmed during the visit of the experts' group. Employers noted long-term cooperation with the DU as well as the readiness to offer students places for internship and workplaces after successful graduation. During the visit, students expressed their satisfaction with the content of the programme outlining the IT and digitalization components and a high number of professionals-practitioners being involved in the study process. During their studies students have an opportunity to visit companies to have their classes held in a professional environment, for example, classes for the course of "Financial system" take place in JSC Swedbank, students also participate in various projects in cooperation with "Magnetic Latvia Daugavpils Business Incubator".

Surveys of students, teaching staff, employers and alumni are used as the main tool to evaluate the study programme. They are conducted systematically on an annual basis aiming to evaluate the programme, define the areas of improvement for the programme and the overall level of satisfaction. Results of the surveys are summarized and analysed by the administration. In case changes and improvements to the study programme are required, they are discussed with the stakeholders and implemented by the Director of the Study Program. During the visit, it was mentioned that reasonable offers and suggestions made via survey are usually considered. Employers are also approached personally and express their opinion on the quality of the study process via interviews. Results of recent surveys indicate that a program required strong practical orientation with more professionals attracted, which was considered while making changes under the current study program. During the pandemic, special attention was paid to the organization of the distance learning process and survey results contributed to the improvement of the distance study process.

During the course, students are offered to participate in the Erasmus+ mobility program. Students are regularly informed of the opportunities available for the current academic year. DU has several agreements concluded with foreign HEIs and applications can be submitted by students according to the stipulated procedure. Applications are reviewed and approved by the Council of studies. Courses

taken in foreign HEIs are recognized in DU. During the meetings it became obvious that students are aware of mobility opportunities, however, the overall level of incoming and outgoing student mobility remains low.

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

In general, it can be concluded that the content of all courses taught under the programme supports the achievement of the intended learning outcomes to educate a professional specialist with a good combination of theoretical knowledge and practical skills including interpersonal and skills and competencies, well prepared for independent work in small and medium-sized companies and contribute to the sustainable development of the region.

Strengths:

1. The programme has a strong practical orientation and strong cooperation with industry companies and experts in Latvia.
2. The programme is held in high esteem by all stakeholders.

Weaknesses:

1. Low level of incoming and outgoing mobility of students.
2. The survey is used as the main tool to get feedback from alumni and students.
3. A compulsory reading list for several courses contains outdated literature.
4. Course “Legal regulation of Business” lacks English literature that makes it inaccessible for foreign students.

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

#### **Analysis**

The University of Daugavpils has implemented broad information and technical base that ensures the quality of the Bachelor's study programme “Business and Financial Processes”. The study programme is implemented mainly in the building in Parādes 1, Daugavpils, which is the location of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Students have access to computer rooms, rooms for consultations and meetings and conference rooms, which are equipped with the necessary technical equipment (SAR, p.44-46, Tour of the facilities). The library is accredited and is included in the Library Register of the Ministry of Culture (SAR, p.46). It is filled with industry-specific literature, offers the help of qualified library staff and has 60 working places, 20 of them equipped with computers. It is adjusted for persons with reduced mobility, offers an ergonomic desk with adjustable height, equipment for persons with visual impairments, wireless internet access and printing, scanning and copying equipment (SAR, p.46-47; Meeting with the library staff). Students also have the opportunity to order information resources from the National Library of Latvia and other state libraries (SAR, p.46-47; Library webpage). Numerous academic databases are available to students on the University's computers and also with remote access – Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO, Science Direct, Cambridge Journals Online. Several business databases are also available on the University's computers – Latvijas standarts, Lursoft, NOZARE.LV and LETA (SAR, p.48; Library webpage). The students particularly appraise the remote access to the academic databases, which is of particular importance to students studying remotely due to Covid-19 restrictions (Meeting with students). The technical provision is sufficient as the study materials are provided in the online Moodle platform, through remotely accessible subscription databases and free resources (SAR, p.48-50).

Even though the informative materials that are indicated in the study course descriptions as the recommended literature could be more up to date as there are more recent editions available for some of the indicated literature (SAR, Annex “Curriculum of the study programme”), the library offers an opportunity to find and order the latest editions of this literature from other libraries (SAR,

p.46; Library homepage) and the ordered literature is delivered within two weeks (Meeting with the library staff).

Moodle platform is actively used in the study process and contains sufficient information for students to reach their study goals (Meeting with students). As lecture delivery shifts to the remote platform, the professors are provided with methodological seminars to develop remote-teaching skills (SAR, p.42) and their skills are positively appraised by the students (Meeting with students).

The University of Daugavpils has also ensured a resource base for conducting remote learning studies – Zoom software and Moodle platform adjusted for more extensive use (SAR, p.42; Meeting with HEI management, students). Several anti-plagiarism methods are used to ensure academic integrity for remote learning students - exams are conducted orally via Zoom, tests are timed (Meeting with study programme directors).

All final papers are submitted for the plagiarism check, according to the procedure “Submission of Final Papers for the Control of Plagiarism in the University of Daugavpils” and accordingly they are checked by using the plagiarism control system WCopyFind. Additionally, supervisors pay attention to the appropriate use of references and the students are required to defend their final papers (Meeting with the quality manager).

During the study process students of the “Business and Financial Processes” programme use IBM SPSS Statistics software, which is installed in computer classrooms and is also accessible remotely (Tour of the facilities), which is an advantage for the remote learning students.

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

The infrastructure and resources available to students ensure a qualitative study process, enable reaching the programme’s learning outcomes and comply with the programme’s conditions and features. Students have access to academic databases, industry databases, specialised software and applications designed for study and research work, library, computer classrooms, lecture rooms, Moodle platform that offers remote access to study materials, and the help of qualified library staff. Lecture rooms and computer rooms are equipped with all the necessary equipment. Meanwhile, the mandatory literature list includes outdated sources that could be updated.

#### **Strengths**

1. Well-established resource base and infrastructure that ensures a qualitative study process, enables reaching the programme’s learning outcomes and complies with the programme’s conditions and features.
2. Academic databases and the time-intensive quantitative data processing software IBM SPSS Statistics is accessible remotely.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. Some study course descriptions include mandatory literature, which is not available in the library or available in only one copy.
2. Some study course descriptions share the same information sources indicated as mandatory literature, which could lead to possible overlap of the study content not only among the study courses in the Bachelor's study programme but also with study courses in the Master's and Doctoral study programme.
3. Descriptions of study courses implemented in English contain mandatory literature in Latvian and German.

## 4. Teaching Staff

### Analysis

The composition of the teaching staff employed in the study programme Business and financial Process complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Cabinet Regulations No. 481 "Regulations on the state standard of the second level professional higher education".

DU has set criteria on the basis of which the selection of academic staff for the provision of study courses in the professional Bachelor programme »Business and financial Process«. Among the 61 members of the academic staff in this programme for less than half of them, DU is the main workplace, the others are visiting lecturers from professional and business environment of economics and finance from Latvia and also abroad - 7 foreign lecturers are involved in the implementation of the programme. The academic staff employed in the programme are experts of the Latvian Council of Science in the field of economic and business and linguistics. 35 lecturers have a doctoral degree and 7 more are doctoral candidates (SAR, p. 162). Qualification of teachers is based on the Cabinet Regulation No. 662 of 28 October 2014 "Regulations on the education and professional qualifications of teachers and the procedure for improving the professional competence of teachers" and submitted CVs. The provision set forth in Article 39 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions - "Lecturers and assistants who do not have a scientific and academic degree need five years of practical work experience corresponding to the subject to be taught" - is being complied with (annex - CV, annex - statement rector). Requirements for lecturers differ depending on their qualification: for theoretical courses of the study programme lecturers have to have appropriate education, academic or scientific degree, or professional experience, research and creative activities, communication skills. Requirements for professionals, practitioners and employers in the field are work experience in private or public institutions related to economics, business and finance and experience in providing specialized study courses (SAR p. 163). Also, knowledge of the English language is important. One of the solutions for delivering in the English language is that more lecturers are involved in the implementation of the study courses and at least one has at least a B2 level of English. Detailed information on several foreign lecturers, that have been involved since 2019 is available (SAR, p. 162). The attraction of foreign lecturers is an important obligation in all programmes at DU.

By combining lecturers with broad scientific interests, highly qualified specialist in different fields (annex: CV of academic staff), the programme provides the implementation of interdisciplinarity and connection with practical aspects of the business environment. Most lecturers have practical experience in a certain field or are working as professionals, managers, entrepreneurs, which confirms their suitability for work in a professional programme. They can also improve their knowledge and competencies while attending guest lecturers' seminars, representing the European Commission, European Parliament, Latvian and other banks, business incubators and other regional business entities, provided by the Department of Economics at the Faculty of Social Sciences (SAR, p. 135). Professional Development Center offers the opportunity to participate in further education courses. Some of the academic staff attended different courses in the past (SAR, p. 162), but there is no mechanism in place, that would make improving competencies obligatory.

All academic staff has the required education and practical work experience, they have competence in industry-based research and in the use of e-environment in the study process (SAR, p. 163). Industry-related research is mostly a result of the individual teacher and their experiences in the field, but there is no visible systematic cooperation with the business community in the field of providing application projects at DU.

Several teachers also teach courses in the second and third cycle programs at the faculty. The number of courses taught by some academic staff varies from one to twelve per one teacher in the programme. Teachers who were present at the interviews stated that the pedagogical obligations are acceptable and that they do not feel the lack of time for research work or for work with students.

They are satisfied with the work environment and especially with systematic support for research work and scientific publications. Documents show (annex - CV of academic staff), that lecturers are professionals in their field, with competence in the research, many have participated in projects and elaborated teaching aids and materials. The combination of academic staff and employer's representatives is very complex and provides the synergy of scientific and practical work. Teachers come from different universities in Latvia and abroad, many are specialists of cities and regions, governmental and non-governmental institutions or recognised practitioners. Lecturers of the study programme also use the opportunity to implement internships in partner companies (SAR, p. 160-163) and use the new knowledge in their study courses. Unfortunately, no information on academic staff CV and bibliography is available on the DU website.

The research and scientific publications of academic staff in the programme are mostly related to their study courses and the relationship between the innovation sector and the needs of the business environment in the region (annex - list of scientific publications). They actively participate in professional and scientific conferences, seminars and projects, many are actively involved in the creation and management of municipal development projects. They have published several professional and scientific papers, some of them also in SCOPUS and WoS databases, study materials and aids and participated in conferences, as well in the research projects (annex - List of scientific peer-reviewed publications of the DU academic staff related to the study programs in the study field "Economics") about all academic staff of this programme and their science evaluation criterion. DU offers good support for scientific creation (annual research work review, financial support, research project competition) and collaboration between academic staff in the research field has good results. They are regularly implemented in the study process, as students have to study a lot of research findings of their teachers, included in the study course plans (annex - curriculum of the programme). Bachelor students also have the opportunity to be involved in some projects (SAR, p.162), mostly applied projects or are engaged as listeners.

Academic staff participate intensively with each other in the preparation and implementation of the study program and study courses, in the preparation of scientific publications and study materials, at professional and international conferences, research projects, with students and colleagues from other departments of DU or from other universities. They regularly cooperate with each other in the process of improving the content and implementation of the study program and curricula, which takes place every year. Forms of cooperation are both formal (various meetings of departments and programme, different bodies and annual meeting of all academic staff) and informal, most often when it comes to the implementation of various activities and projects. Peer evaluation in the classroom, as well as with research work, was highlighted as a good practice. At the interview, academic staff expressed satisfaction with the fact, that two or more teachers are engaged in the implementation of each study course that ensures integration of knowledge and practice, but some would like to expose even more project-based work in interaction with students.

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

Conclusions:

The DU has set criteria on the basis of which the selection of academic staff for the provision of study courses in the Bachelor programme guarantees compliance with the regulations and has no negative effects on the quality of the implementation of the study programme or the compliance of the study programme. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments, and it enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. The number and the structure of academic staff are appropriate, many are well-qualified

practitioners or visiting lecturers from abroad, less than half of teachers are employees of DU. The academic staff are academics and practitioners, with good research publications and research project history. Applied research projects are delivered by the individual teachers, there is no visible systematic cooperation with the business community in the field of providing application projects at DU, which would be important especially for Bachelor students. In general, academic staff are very loyal and motivated and satisfied with the working conditions and support they are receiving for their pedagogical, research and scientific work. Formal and informal collaboration of academic staff contributes to the improvement of the programme. The scientific publications and the involvement in research projects have shown significant progress both in terms of numbers and international inclusion.

Strengths:

1. Very motivated and loyal academic staff
2. Good practice in collaboration - peer evaluation in the classroom and in the scientific production, joint scientific publications
3. Significant progress in the field of scientific publications, involvement in international projects, transfer of innovations in the implementation of the program.
4. Involvement of some students in applied research.

Weaknesses:

1. The website does not contain information about the achievements of academic staff, including their CV and bibliographies.
2. The number of courses per academic staff in the programme is high in some cases.
3. No visible systematic cooperation with the business community in the field of providing application projects at the level of the DU.

## **5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Business and Financial Processes"**

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT submitted for evaluation purpose complies with the Cabinet Regulation 202.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** STATEMENT submitted to the expert panel for evaluation purpose in the form of an appendix. Agreement with Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LULST), provided as Annex "Vienosanas\_starp\_DU\_LLU\_ENG" of the programme SAR, ensures the opportunity to pursue studies in the event of termination of the professional Bachelor's study programme "Business and Financial Processes". However, the agreement stipulates the continuation of studies in the professional Bachelor's study programme "Entrepreneurship and Business Management", which does not provide studies in English and is currently not accredited to offer any professional qualifications. Meanwhile, the study programme "Business and Financial Processes" offers studies in English and provides a possibility to gain a professional qualification "Financier" or "Company manager". Thus, the study programme stipulated in the agreement does not ensure the same conditions and possibilities as the study programme "Business and Financial Processes".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Agreement on the compensation of losses provides full coverage of losses if the study programme is not accredited or the license of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The expert panel made this conclusion based on the CVs of teaching staff received prior to the visit and information received during the visit.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** STATEMENT OF CONFORMITY provided by the DU to the expert panel for evaluation purposes, CVs of teaching staff provided by the DU, However, evidence received during the visit and interviews with teaching staff revealed the low level of English language expressed by the teaching staff. The expert panel would recommend to improve the overall level of English among the academic staff.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Sample of the study agreement provided in Annexes complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Complies with valid professional standards (financier - PS 117 and business manager - PS-115).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Complies with valid professional standards (financier - PS 117 and business manager - PS-115) as well as with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 512 "Regulations on the state standard of second-level professional higher education" of 26 August, 2014 (Document named "Compliance of the PBSP "Business and Financial Processes" with the state education standard" was submitted to the expert group).

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.1, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The conclusions were based on the CVs of teaching staff received prior to the visit as well as the List of the publications, patents, and artistic creations of the teaching staff over the reporting period presented to the expert panel. Information received during the visit also confirms full compliance.

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** In general, it can be concluded that mostly all the related requirements for the study programme have been met. However, the expert panel has detected an area of partial compliance: Low level of foreign language among the DU academic staff. Therefore, the expert panel should recommend improving the overall level of English language among the academic staff of DU.

## Requirements (R6-R8)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Facilities and resources observed during the site visit were a solid justification of the compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** CV provided by the DU, interviews during the site visit, feedback from students and alumni received during the visit confirmed justified the compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:** Non-applicable

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

In general, it can be concluded that mostly all the related requirements for the study programme have been met. However, the expert panel detected several partial compliances like, - Low level of foreign language among the DU academic staff, agreement on the compensation of losses provides only partial coverage of losses, in case of termination of the Bachelor study programme, the study programme stipulated in the agreement does not ensure the same conditions and possibilities as the study programme "Business and Financial Processes". Therefore, the expert panel should recommend to improve the overall level of English language among the academic staff of DU, Incorporate the full coverage of losses into the agreement on the compensation of losses and in case of the termination of the program ensure that the offered study programme ensures the same conditions and possibilities as the terminated one

The expert panel has observed the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths:

1. The program structure, aims, tasks and learning outcomes are aiming to contribute to the recent developments of the region and the demand of the labour market.
2. Program has a strong practical orientation and strong cooperation with industry companies and

experts in Latvia.

3. Program is held in high esteem by all stakeholders.

4. Well-established resource base and infrastructure that ensures a qualitative study process, enables reaching the programme's learning outcomes and complies with the programme's conditions and features.

5. Academic databases and the time-intensive quantitative data processing software IBM SPSS Statistics is accessible remotely.

6. Very motivated and loyal academic staff

7. Good practice in collaboration - peer evaluation in the classroom and in the scientific production, joint scientific publications.

8. Significant progress in the field of scientific publications, involvement in international projects, transfer of innovations in the implementation of the program.

9. Involvement of some students in applied research.

Weaknesses:

1. Low level of incoming and outgoing mobility of students.

2. Survey is used as the main tool to get feedback from alumni and students.

3. Compulsory reading list for several courses contains outdated literature.

4. Course "Legal regulation of Business" lacks English literature that makes it inaccessible for foreign students.

5. The website does not contain information about the achievements of academic staff, including their CV and bibliographies.

6. The number of courses per academic staff in the programme is high in some cases.

7. No visible systematic cooperation with the business community in the field of providing application projects at the level of the DU.

8. Some study course descriptions include mandatory literature, which is not available in the library or available in only one copy.

9. Some study course descriptions share the same information sources indicated as mandatory literature, which could lead to possible overlap of the study content not only among the study courses in the Bachelor's study programme but also with study courses in the Master's and Doctoral study programme.

10. Descriptions of study courses implemented in English contain mandatory literature in Latvian and German.

11. The website does not contain information about the achievements of academic staff, including their CV and bibliographies.

12. The number of courses per academic staff in the programme is high in some cases.

13. No visible systematic cooperation with the business community in the field of providing application projects at the level of the DU.

14. Agreement with Rēzekne Academy of Technologies (RTA) does not ensure the provision of further studies for students that within the scope of the professional Master's study programme "Smart Economics and Innovation" have chosen to pursue the professional qualification "Economist".

15. Limited knowledge of the English language among teaching staff.

## **Evaluation of the study programme "Business and Financial Processes"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Business and Financial Processes"**

## Short-term recommendations

1. Use more possibilities to attract foreign students within the framework of the Erasmus+ program.
2. Consider wide implementation of other methods like round-tables, brainstorming, interviews etc. of receiving feedback from all groups of stakeholders and in the future consider establishing an Industrial Advisory Board according to best international practices.
3. Include books in English into the compulsory reading list for the "Legal regulation of Business" in order to make the course accessible for foreign or exchange students.
4. Review study course descriptions and update the "Compulsory reading list" for some courses to make sure that the most recent developments and achievements in the study field are considered.
5. Update the website so that information about academic staff is accessible - a link to their professional CVs and to their bibliography and projects.
6. Assess the optimal number of study courses taught by an individual teacher in the program in connection with the quality of implementation and in relation to the research and other obligations of the individual.
7. With the support of existing organizational units at DU design ways of direct cooperation with the business community for the implementation of applied research and knowledge transfer, so that more students will be able to participate in the research.
8. Update the website so that information about academic staff is accessible - a link to their professional CVs and to their bibliography and projects.
9. With the support of existing organizational units at DU design ways of direct cooperation with the business community for the implementation of applied research and knowledge transfer, so that more students will be able to participate in the research process, with the help of their teachers.
10. Ensure that all study course descriptions include mandatory literature, which is available in the library in a sufficient number of copies.
11. In case of the termination of the program ensure that the offered study programme ensures the same conditions and possibilities as the terminated one.
12. Improve the overall level of the English language among the academic staff of DU.

## Long-term recommendations

1. Review the indicated mandatory literature to ensure that the same source, which is used in several study courses, does not lead to overlapping study content. In case different parts of the same source are used for different study courses, indicate the parts or pages of the source, which is the intended compulsory reading for the particular study course.
2. Review the indicated mandatory literature for study courses implemented in English to ensure that information sources in English are listed for the compulsory reading.

## II. "Smart Economics and Innovation" ASSESSMENT

## II. "Smart Economics and Innovation" ASSESSMENT

### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

#### Analysis

The aim of the "PMSP "Smart Economics and Innovation" (47311) study program is to provide students at the national and international level with competitive knowledge, relevant skills and competencies for analytical evaluation of economic and financial processes in the context of smart development, emphasizing research skills for scientific and academic work and training highly qualified specialists in accordance with professional standards "Financial analyst" (profession code PS-118) and "Economist"(profession code PS-113). The acquired qualification levels correspond to the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) 7 and 6 also takes into consideration recent regional developments, market requirements and professional standards "PS-113 Economist" and "PS-118 Financial Analyst". During the visit, it was noted that the received qualification of Economist corresponds to level 6 of the LQF, which is actually corresponding to the Bachelor level. During the visit, experts addressed this issue and the representatives of the DU claimed that this choice is justified as the PMSP "Smart Economy and Innovation" (47311) has a strong professional aspect and while students obtain, knowledge and competencies of level 7 of LQF they also get a wide range of professional skills within "Economist" qualification, which is highly rated in universities outside Latvia at both Bachelor and Master level: the practical part of the program allows students to get a closer look at different types of work performed within one company there the future graduates can implement their knowledge and skills. This program also allows applicants who have previously obtained a professional qualification in the field of economics (both Economist PQL5, LQF Level 6 and other PQL5 qualifications, e.g., "Company Manager" or "Financier") not to obtain another similar PQL5 qualification, but instead obtain only the master's degree by studying in the PMSP "Smart Economics and Innovation" version designed for 1.5 years of studies (60 CP). Experts panel has reviewed the content of the program aims, task and learning outcomes and believed that considering that "Economist" qualification provides a wide range of implications, this choice is well-justified assuming that substance prevails of form. However, this assumption contradicts relevant and valid regulations, which do not allow to award the qualification of the 6th level in Master's programmes. Therefore, taking into consideration all the abovementioned the expert panel would recommend to review the professional qualifications awarded in order to resolve this discrepancy.

Graduates are awarded a Master's degree in Economics with the qualification of a financial analyst or economist being also able to continue their education at other higher education institutions to obtain a PhD degree. The study program has several main objectives outlining necessary knowledge, skills and competencies formulated in accordance with the level 7 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework level. Objectives, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme are clearly defined. A strong impact is placed on the professional aspect of the program, which is highly valued by students and employers. During the visit, employers emphasized that the programme is tailored to the demand of the current labour market and situation in the Latgale region.

The admission of students is based on regulatory laws and legislation (Article 46 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 846 (as of 10 October 2006) "Regulations regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes". Prerequisites for admission to the program are transparent and ensure the entrants of the program with the appropriate level of the knowledge and skills, which is required to achieve the learning outcomes of the program, admission rules are clearly defined and publicly available at the website of the DU. <https://du.lv/ieskaties-augstskola/skoleniem/uznemsana/>

Admission requirements for foreign students are publicly available at the DU website: [https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ENG-4\\_uznem\\_not\\_pilna\\_laika\\_studijam\\_arvalstniekiem\\_20](https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ENG-4_uznem_not_pilna_laika_studijam_arvalstniekiem_20)

21.pdf. Foreign applicants have to pass the English language proficiency test in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 846 “Regulations Regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes”.

Different options are offered for students to conduct their studies:

- Full-time studies -2 years - in Latvian - professional Master’s degree in economics and qualification of Financial analyst or economist;
- Full-time studies - 2 years - in English - professional Master’s degree in economics and qualification of Financial analyst or economist;
- Part-time studies - 2 years, 6 months - in Latvian- professional Master’s degree in economics and qualification of Financial analyst or economist;
- Part-time studies - 2 years, 6 months - in English - professional Master’s degree in economics and qualification of Financial analyst or economist;
- Part-time studies - 1 year, 6 months - in the Latvian language - professional Master’s degree in economics;
- Part-time studies - 1 year, 6 months - in the English language - professional Master’s degree in economics.

The last two options are designed for the applicants having already obtained a professional qualification in the field of economics willing to obtain only the master’s degree under the specialization of the PMSP “Smart Economics and Innovation”.

Given the fact that Economist qualification corresponds to the LQF Level 6 which complies with the bachelor study level, the experts advise to offer the following options for the studies:

- Full-time studies -2 years - in Latvian - professional Master’s degree in economics and qualification of Financial analyst
- Full-time studies - 2 years - in English - professional Master’s degree in economics and qualification of Financial analyst
- Part-time studies - 2 years, 6 months - in Latvian- professional Master’s degree in economics and qualification of Financial analyst
- Part-time studies - 2 years, 6 months - in English - professional Master’s degree in economics and qualification of Financial analyst
- Part-time studies - 1 year, 6 months - in the Latvian language - professional Master’s degree in economics;
- Part-time studies - 1 year, 6 months - in the English language - professional Master’s degree in economics.

The experts would advise to start procedures that would develop and officially approve professional qualification economist to the LQF level 7.

The data presented to the experts’ panel shows a slight decline in the number of enrolled students from 37 in the 2013/2014 academic year till 25 for the 2019/2020 academic year, being relatively stable during the last five years. The number of graduates in the period of 2016-2020 remains relatively stable in the range of 10-15 per year. During the meeting with students, it was defined that the main reason for the drop-out rate is that some students find it difficult to find a balance between work, studies and private life, as most master students work and already have families. It was also mentioned that COVID-19 had a strong personal and academic impact on the dropout rate.

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

In general, it can be concluded the name of the study programme “PMSP “Smart Economics and Innovation” and the professional qualifications “PS-113 Economist” and “PS-118 Financial Analyst”, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are logically interrelated. The study programme code and the degree awarded complies with the Classification of Latvian Education. However, the

professional qualification" PS-113 Economist", is awarded after the completion of the relevant part of the program, which is currently not allowed by valid Latvian regulations.

Strengths:

The program has a strong professional aspect aiming to contribute to the recent developments of the region and the demand of the labour market.

Weaknesses:

Professional qualification" PS-113 Economist" is awarded after the completion of the relevant part of the program, which is currently not allowed by Latvian regulations.

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

### **Analysis**

PMSP "Smart Economics and Innovation" comply with the Cabinet Regulations No. 512 Regulations on the state standard of the second level of professional higher education as well as the "Business, Finance, Accounting, Administration (Wholesale, Retail and Commerce) Sector" qualification structure and the corresponding professional standards adopted on April 10, 2019. The study process is organized in compliance with the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the Regulations on Studies of DU and other relevant regulatory documents.

The programme is intended to prepare highly qualified specialists able to work in the field of economy and finances implementing modern skills and knowledge obtained during the study course as well as the modern work approach. The programme also contributes to smart economic knowledge transfer and strengthening the innovation capacity of companies, in line with the latest developments in the region as stated in the Guidelines for Science, Technology Development and Innovation 2021-2027.

The aim, task and learning outcomes of the study programme correspond to the seventh EQF level (Cabinet Regulation No. 322 "Regulations on the Classification of Latvian Education") enabling graduates also to obtain the qualification of „PS-118 Financial Analyst" or "PS-113 Economist".

It is also notable that the programme aims to attract students with various intentions including those who are willing to get both professional qualification and Master degree and those with professional degree aiming to get all the benefits of skills and knowledge obtained in the course of the study programme. The main feature of this programme is that the study programme is flexible and adapted to the interests of various students, providing for both studies after obtaining a Bachelor's degree or 2nd level professional qualification, and considering previous work experience in the respective field, thus allowing for equating at least 2 years of professional experience in economics, finance, business or management as evidenced by a certificate from the workplace.

The programme is also offered in English and the DU is planning to offer internship for these students attracting various employers from the region.

The programme comprises either 80 CP or 60 CP in total depending on whether students get a professional qualification. The programme consists of mandatory courses (part A) and limited elective courses (part B) ensuring a well-developed balance between elective and mandatory courses. Knowledge and competencies are assessed on a 10-point scale or as "passed/ failed" if the volume of the study course does not exceed 2CP. This is an interesting and contemporary interdisciplinary programme, which includes relevant study courses like "Intellectual property and its assessment", "Starting business and innovative business models", "Knowledge-based economics and innovation governance", "Professional ethics and corporate social responsibility", ensuring the acquirement of professional competences in line with the requirement of modern labour market containing such relevant. Courses are delivered by highly qualified teaching staff and experienced professionals making a strong emphasis on the practical aspect of the programme. Reasonable and well-balanced organization of the study process provides obtaining general theoretical knowledge in the field of economy and finances followed by professional knowledge and skills contributing to the

elaboration of the master thesis, which is defended at the end of the course. Topics for a Master thesis are usually chosen as a result of a practical internship. The duration of the internship depends on the chosen outcome of studies and lasts 26 weeks (acquisition of a professional Master's degree and professional qualification) or 6 weeks (acquisition of a professional Master's degree only) of professional practical placement outside the university. Students, without professional experience, have two types of internship: an introductory in the second semester (6CP) and a specialization internship in the 4th study semester (20CP). Students with previous professional experience have only specialization internship in the volume of 6 CP. The aim of the internship is to give all students an opportunity to take an active part in the work of the selected company or organization. During the academic year, 2020/2021 students were offered an internship in leading regional companies including JSC Daugavpils Locomotive Repair Plant DLRR (headed by CFO), Axon Cable Ltd., construction company Lagron Ltd., design company Rem Pro Ltd. The strong practical aspect of the programme is highly valued by all stakeholders.

All study courses are relevant and constantly updated, implementing various modern study methods like lectures, case studies, team building, tests, panel discussions, FinTeh, tools of budgeting and project development, independent work and research etc. encouraging students to be involved in discussions, sharing their ideas and taking an active part in the learning process. During their studies, students can use the library and all available scientific databases, get feedback via Moodle or ask teaching staff for additional consultations, which are always on request and can also be arranged via Zoom.

Programme is held in high esteem by employers which were also confirmed during the visit of the experts' group. Employers noted long-term cooperation with the University of Daugavpils as well as the readiness to offer students places for internship and workplaces after successful graduation. During the visit, students expressed their satisfaction with the content of the programme outlining the IT and smart knowledge transfer components and the high number of professionals-practitioners being involved in the study process.

Surveys of students, teaching staff, employers and alumni are used as the main tool to evaluate the study programme. They are conducted systematically on an annual basis aiming to evaluate the programme, define the areas of improvement for the programme and the overall level of satisfaction. Results of the surveys are summarized and analysed by the administration. In case changes and improvements to the study programme are required, they are discussed with the stakeholders and implemented by the Director of the Study Program. During the visit, it was mentioned that reasonable offers and suggestions made via survey are usually considered. Employers are also approached personally and asked to express their opinion on the quality of the study process via interviews. Results of recent surveys indicate that a program is constantly updated taking into consideration the latest innovation and digitalization requirements. Feedback received from students is also considered valuable and as a result, the study course "Digital marketing" was included in the content of the programme in line with students' desire.

During the course, students are offered to participate in the Erasmus+ mobility program. They are kept constantly informed on the opportunities available for the current academic year. DU has numerous agreements concluded with foreign HEIs and applications can be submitted by students according to the stipulated procedure. Applications are reviewed and approved by the Council of studies. Courses taken in foreign HEIs are recognized in DU. During the meetings, it became obvious that students are aware of mobility opportunities, but due to the fact that in general master students work and study at the same time, the overall level of incoming and outgoing student mobility remains low.

In general, it can be concluded that the content of all courses taught under the program supports the achievement of the intended learning outcomes to educate professional specialists aiming to work in the field of economy and finances contributing to smart economic knowledge transfer and strengthening the innovation capacity of companies, in line with latest developments in the region.

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

In general, it can be concluded that the descriptions of the study courses are well prepared in compliance with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The content is relevant and complementary addressing the goals of the ensuring the achievement of established learning outcomes considering the feedback from all relevant stakeholders and the latest development and requirements in the region. During the study process a wide range of teaching methods including learner-centred methods are implemented. Therefore, it can be stated that the program educates professional specialists aiming to work in the field of economy and finances contributing to smart economic knowledge transfer and strengthening the innovation capacity of companies, in line with the latest developments in the region.

Strengths:

The programme has a strong practical orientation and strong cooperation with industry companies and experts in Latvia.

The programme offers various opportunities for different groups of applicants considering the level of their previous professional experience.

Weaknesses:

Low level of incoming and outgoing mobility of students.

The survey is used as the main tool to get feedback from alumni and students.

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

### **Analysis**

Similarly, as for the Bachelor's study programme, the University of Daugavpils has implemented broad information and technical base that ensures the quality of the Master's study programme "Smart Economics and Innovation". The study programme is implemented mainly in the building in Parādes 1, Daugavpils, which is the location of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Students have access to computer rooms, rooms for consultations and meetings and conference rooms, which are equipped with the necessary technical equipment (SAR, p.44-46, Tour of the facilities). The library is accredited and is included in the Library Register of the Ministry of Culture (SAR, p.46). It is filled with industry-specific literature, offers the help of qualified library staff and has 60 working places, 20 of them equipped with computers. It is adjusted for persons with reduced mobility, offers an ergonomic desk with adjustable height, equipment for persons with visual impairments, wireless internet access and printing, scanning and copying equipment (SAR, p.46-47; Meeting with the library staff). Students also have the opportunity to order information resources from the National Library of Latvia and other state libraries (SAR, p.46-47; Library webpage). Numerous academic databases are available to students on the University's computers and also with remote access - Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO, Science Direct, Cambridge Journals Online. Several business databases are also available on the University's computers - Latvijās standarts, Lursoft, NOZARE.LV and LETA (SAR, p.48; Library webpage). The students particularly appraise the remote access to the academic databases, which is of particular importance to students studying remotely due to Covid-19 restrictions (Meeting with students). The technical provision is sufficient as the study materials are provided in the online Moodle platform, through remotely accessible subscription databases and free resources (SAR, p.48-50).

Even though the informative materials that are indicated in the study course descriptions as the recommended literature could be more up to date as there are more recent editions available for some of the indicated literature (SAR, Annex "Curriculum of the study programme"), the library offers an opportunity to find and order the latest editions of this literature from other libraries (SAR, p.46; Library homepage) and the ordered literature is delivered within two weeks (Meeting with the

library staff).

However, there are instances when the mandatory literature is not available in the library, for example, “Accounting and business valuation methods” by Howard M.K. in the study course “Corporate finances and investments” (SAR, Annex “Descriptions of the study courses”; Library catalogue). This particular example of literature is also not available in the joint library catalogue (Joint catalogue). In other cases, the mandatory literature is not available in the catalogue of the University of Daugavpils but is available in the joint library catalogue. There are also instances of mandatory literature being available in the library, but only in one copy. The availability of the mandatory literature should be reviewed to ensure that all the students of a particular study course have access to the indicated sources of the compulsory reading list.

Moodle platform is actively used in the study process and contains sufficient information for students to reach their study goals (Meeting with students). As lecture delivery shifts to the remote platform, the professors are provided with methodological seminars to develop remote-teaching skills (SAR, p.42) and their skills are positively appraised by the students (Meeting with students).

The University of Daugavpils has also ensured a resource base for conducting remote learning studies – Zoom software and Moodle platform adjusted for more extensive use (SAR, p.42; Meeting with HEI management, students). Several anti-plagiarism methods are used to ensure academic integrity for remote learning students - exams are conducted orally via Zoom, tests are timed (Meeting with study programme directors).

All final papers are submitted for the plagiarism check, according to the procedure “Submission of Final Papers for the Control of Plagiarism in the University of Daugavpils” and accordingly they are checked by using the plagiarism control system WCopyFind. Additionally, supervisors pay attention to the appropriate use of references and the students are required to defend their final papers (Meeting with the quality manager).

During the study process students of the “Smart Economics and Innovation” programme use IBM SPSS Statistics software, which is installed in computer classrooms and is also accessible remotely (Tour of the facilities; Meeting with graduates), which is an advantage for the remote learning students.

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

The infrastructure and resources available to students ensure a qualitative study process, enable reaching the programme’s learning outcomes and comply with the programme’s conditions and features. Students have access to academic databases, industry databases, specialised software and applications designed for research work, library, computer classrooms, lecture rooms, Moodle platform that offers remote access to study materials, and the help of qualified library staff. Lecture rooms and computer rooms are equipped with all the necessary equipment. Meanwhile, the mandatory literature list includes outdated sources and some of these sources are not available in the library.

### **Strengths**

1. Well-established resource base and infrastructure that ensures a qualitative study process, enables reaching the programme’s learning outcomes and complies with the programme’s conditions and features.
2. Academic databases and the time-intensive quantitative data processing software IBM SPSS

Statistics is accessible remotely.

#### Weaknesses

1. Some study course descriptions include outdated literature, which is available in more recent editions.
2. Some study course descriptions include mandatory literature, which is not available in the library or available in only one copy.
3. Some study course descriptions share the same information sources indicated as mandatory literature, which could lead to possible overlap of the study content not only among the study courses in the Master's study programme but also with study courses in the Doctoral study programme.
4. Descriptions of study courses implemented in English contain mandatory literature in Latvian.

## 4. Teaching Staff

### Analysis

DU has set criteria on the basis of which the selection of academic staff for the provision of study courses in the professional Master's study programme »Smart economics and innovation«. Among the 22 academic staff members of this programme half of them, DU is the main workplace, the other half are visiting lecturers from professional and business environment of economics and finance from Latvia and abroad. 5 of the academic staff are professors, also teaching at the doctoral programme, 64% already have a doctoral degree and 4 are applicants for a doctoral degree. Detailed information on several foreign visiting professors, who were involved in the implementation of the programme, is available (SAR, p. 135).

By combining lecturers with broad scientific interests, highly qualified specialist in different fields (annex - CV of academic staff), the programme provides the implementation of interdisciplinarity. Most lecturers have practical experience in a certain field, which confirms their suitability for work in a professional programme. They can also improve their knowledge and competencies while attending guest lecturers seminars, representing the European Commission, European Parliament, Latvian and other banks, business incubators and other regional business entities, provided by the Department of Economics at the Faculty of Social Sciences (SAR, p. 135).

All academic staff has the required education and practical work experience. Several teachers also teach courses in the first and second cycle programs at the faculty, only a few have courses only in the Master programme. The number of courses taught by some academic staff varies from one to ten per one teacher in the programme. Teachers who were present at the interviews stated that the pedagogical obligations are acceptable and that they do not feel the lack of time for research work or for work with students. They are satisfied with the work environment and especially with systematic support for research work and scientific publications. Documents show (annex - CV of academic staff), that lecturers are professionals in their field, with competence in the research, many have participated in international projects and elaborated teaching aids and materials. The combination of academic staff and employer's representatives is very complex and provides the synergy of scientific and practical work. Teachers come from different universities in Latvia and abroad, many are specialists of cities and regions, governmental and non-governmental institutions or recognised practitioners. Lecturers of the study programme also use the opportunity to implement internships in partner companies (SAR, p. 136) and use the new knowledge in their study courses. Unfortunately, no information on academic staff CV and bibliography is available on the DU website.

The research and scientific publications of academic staff in the programme are mostly related to their study courses and the relationship between the innovation sector and the needs of the business environment in the region (annex - list of scientific publications). They have published

several scientific papers, some of them also in SCOPUS and WoS databases, study materials and participated in conferences, as well in the research projects (annex - List of scientific peer-reviewed publications of the DU academic staff related to the study programs in the study field "Economics") about all academic staff of this programme and their science evaluation criterion. DU offers good support for scientific creation (annual research work review, financial support, research project competition) and collaboration between academic staff in the research field has good results. They are regularly implemented in the study process, as students have to study a lot of research findings of their teachers, included in the study course plans (annex - curriculum of the programme). Master students also have the opportunity to be involved in some projects (SAR, p.137).

Academic staff in the master program are motivated to get involved in Erasmus + activities to improve their competencies in different fields and they perform 10 mobilities in teaching or training on average per year (SAR, p. 138). They participate intensively with each other in the preparation and implementation of the study program and study courses, in the preparation of scientific publications and study materials, at international conferences, research projects, with students and colleagues from other departments of DU or from other universities. They regularly cooperate with each other in the process of improving the content and implementation of the study program and curricula, which takes place every year. Forms of cooperation are both formal (various meetings of departments and programme, different bodies and annual meeting of all academic staff) and informal, most often when it comes to the implementation of various activities and projects. Peer evaluation in the classroom, as well as with research work, was highlighted as a good practice. At the interview, academic staff expressed satisfaction with the fact, that two or more teachers are engaged in the implementation of each study course that ensures integration of knowledge and practice, but some would like to expose even more project-based work in interaction with students.

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

### Conclusions:

The DU has set criteria on the basis of which the selection of academic staff for the provision of study courses in the master programme has no negative effects on the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments, and it enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. The number and the structure of academic staff are appropriate, with half of the teachers that are not an employee of DU. The academic staff are academics and practitioners, with good research and research project history. In general, academic staff are very loyal and motivated and satisfied with the working conditions and support they are receiving for their pedagogical, research and scientific work. Erasmus + mobility for teaching and training is well accepted. Formal and informal collaboration of academic staff contributes to the improvement of the programme. The scientific publications and the involvement in research projects have shown significant progress both in terms of numbers and international inclusion.

### Strengths:

1. Very motivated and loyal academic staff.
2. Good practice in collaboration - peer evaluation in the classroom and in the scientific production, joint scientific publications.
3. Significant progress in the field of scientific publications, involvement in international projects,

transfer of innovations in the implementation of the program and Erasmus mobility for teaching and training.

4. Involvement of some students in research projects and joint publishing.

Weaknesses:

1. The website does not contain information about the achievements of academic staff, including their CV and bibliographies.
2. The number of courses per academic staff in the programme is high in some cases.

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Smart Economics and Innovation"

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT submitted for evaluation purpose complies with the Cabinet Regulation 202.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** Agreement with Rēzekne Academy of Technologies (RTA), provided as Annex "DU\_RTA\_vienošanās\_ENG" of the programme SAR, ensures the opportunity to pursue studies in the event of termination of the professional Master's study programme "Smart Economics and Innovation". However, this agreement stipulates that RTA will undertake the provision of further studies only for the students that pursue the professional qualification "Financial analyst". The agreement does not ensure the provision of further studies for students that within the scope of the professional Master's study programme "Smart Economics and Innovation" have chosen to pursue the professional qualification "Economist".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Agreement on the compensation of losses provides full coverage of losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Having reviewed the CVs of teaching staff received prior to the visit and information received during the visit experts panel concluded that 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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** STATEMENT OF CONFORMITY provided by the DU to the expert panel for evaluation purposes, CVs of teaching staff provided by the DU. However, evidence received during the visit and interviews with teaching staff revealed the low level of English language expressed by the teaching staff. The expert panel would recommend to improve the overall level of English among the academic staff.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Sample of the study agreement provided in Annexes complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme "Smart Economics and Innovation" complies with the state education standard " Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 512 "Regulations on the state standard of second-level professional higher education" of August 26, 2014", which was also confirmed by the document provided by the DU.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The study programme complies with professional standards "Financial analyst" (profession code PS-118) and "Economist" (profession code PS-113). However, "Economist" (profession code PS-113) corresponds to LQF 6, but for the Master level programme, LQF 7 level is required. Thus, it is advisable in this programme to offer "Financial analyst" qualification only.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** CVs of teaching staff, List of the publications, patents, and artistic creations of the teaching staff over the reporting period. Information received during the visit justified that each member of the academic staff has publications on the relevant topic published in reviewed academic journals in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** In general, it can be concluded that mostly all the related requirements for the study programme have been met. However, the expert panel has detected several areas of partial compliance:

Professional qualification "PS-113 Economist", should not be awarded under this study programme, which is currently not allowed by valid Latvian regulations.

## Requirements (R6-R8)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Facilities and resources observed during the site visit were a solid justification of the compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** 15 highly qualified lecturers are engaged in the implementation of the DSP "Economics": 5 professors, 4 associate professors, 2 docents, 4 leading researchers and researchers, including 12 lecturers whose primary employment is DU. Criteria for selecting lecturers for the provision of study courses in the programme comply with legislation and are: appropriate education, academic or scientific degree, professional experience, research and creative activities (publications in the relevant field, research in the field of economics and finance, participation in projects). Nine lecturers are experts of the Latvian Council of Science in the field "Social sciences. Economics and Entrepreneurship", one is an LCS expert in the field "Social sciences - law" and one - an LCS expert in the field "Social sciences - psychology". (SER, p.105-111, anenex regarding scientific publications, annex - CV of the academic staff).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** CVs of teaching staff, List of the publications, patents, and artistic creations of the teaching staff over the reporting period. Information received during the visit.

### Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

In general, it can be concluded that most of the related requirements for the study programme have been met with learning outcomes, awarded degree and admission requirements are logically interrelated.

However, it should be noted that professional qualification "PS-113 Economist" being awarded after the completion of the relevant part of the program, which is currently not allowed by valid Latvian regulations, thus the experts advise to award only the professional qualification "Financial Analyst" for this programme. Therefore, expert panel considered all the related documents, information received during the visit, reviewed all the assessment criteria and rated the programme as "good".

The expert panel has observed the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths:

1. The programme has a strong professional aspect aiming to contribute to the recent developments of the region and the demand of the labour market.
2. The programme has a strong practical orientation and strong cooperation with industry companies and experts in Latvia.
3. The programme offers various opportunities for different groups of applicants considering the level of their previous professional experience.
4. Well-established resource base and infrastructure that ensures a qualitative study process, enables reaching the programme's learning outcomes and complies with the programme's conditions and features.
5. Academic databases and the time-intensive quantitative data processing software IBM SPSS Statistics is accessible remotely.
6. Very motivated and loyal academic staff
7. Good practice in collaboration - peer evaluation in the classroom and in the scientific production, joint scientific publications
8. Significant progress in the field of scientific publications, involvement in international projects, transfer of innovations in the implementation of the program and Erasmus mobility for teaching and training.
9. Involvement of some students in research projects and joint publishing

Weaknesses:

1. Low level of incoming and outgoing mobility of students.
2. Survey is used as the main tool to get feedback from alumni and students.
3. Compulsory reading list for several courses contains outdated literature.
4. Course "Legal regulation of Business" lacks English literature that makes it inaccessible for foreign students.
5. The website does not contain information about the achievements of academic staff, including their CV and bibliographies.
6. The number of courses per academic staff in the programme is high in some cases.
7. No visible systematic cooperation with the business community in the field of providing application projects at the level of the DU.
8. Some study course descriptions include mandatory literature, which is not available in the library or available in only one copy.
9. Some study course descriptions share the same information sources indicated as mandatory literature, which could lead to possible overlap of the study content not only among the study courses in the Bachelor's study programme but also with study courses in the Master's and Doctoral study programme.
10. Descriptions of study courses implemented in English contain mandatory literature in Latvian and German.
11. The website does not contain information about the achievements of academic staff, including their CV and bibliographies.
12. The number of courses per academic staff in the programme is high in some cases.
13. No visible systematic cooperation with the business community in the field of providing application projects at the level of the DU.
14. Agreement with Rēzekne Academy of Technologies (RTA) does not ensure the provision of further studies for students that within the scope of the professional Master's study programme "Smart Economics and Innovation" have chosen to pursue the professional qualification "Economist".
15. Limited knowledge of the English language among teaching staff.

## **Evaluation of the study programme "Smart Economics and Innovation"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Smart Economics and Innovation"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

- |  |
|--|
| 1. Review the necessity of awarding professional qualification "PS-113 Economist", received by students after the completion of the relevant part of the program, which is currently not allowed by Latvian regulations, and find the way to resolve this discrepancy.   |
| 2. Use more possibilities to attract foreign students within the framework of the Erasmus+ program and inspire students of DU to participate in the Erasmus+ program.  |
| 3. Consider wide implementation of other methods like round-tables, brainstorming, interviews etc. of receiving feedback from all groups of stakeholders and in the future consider establishing an Industrial Advisory Board according to best international practices. |
| 4. Ensure that all study course descriptions include mandatory literature, which is available in the library in a sufficient number of copies.   |

5. Review study course descriptions and update the "Compulsory reading list" for some courses to make sure that the most recent developments and achievements in the study field are considered.
6. Update the website so that information about academic staff is accessible - a link to their professional CVs and to their bibliography and projects
7. Assess the optimal number of study courses taught by an individual teacher in the program in connection with the quality of implementation and in relation to the research and other obligations of the individual.
9. Improve the overall level of the English language among the academic staff of DU.

### Long-term recommendations

1. Review the indicated mandatory literature to ensure that the same source, which is used in several study courses, does not lead to overlapping study content. In case different parts of the same source are used for different study courses, indicate the parts or pages of the source, which is the intended compulsory reading for the particular study course.
2. Review the indicated mandatory literature for study courses implemented in English to ensure that information sources in English are listed for the compulsory reading.

## II. "Economics" ASSESSMENT

### II. "Economics" ASSESSMENT

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

The aim of the Doctoral study programme "Economics" (51311) study program is to improve the research and academic competence of doctoral students for independent and innovative research and practical activities in economics for the improvement of economic theories, as well as to train highly qualified specialists for independent academic, research and practical work in the sub-branches of economics "Regional economics" and "Finance and credit". In the opinion of the expert panel in general the aim corresponds to the knowledge and skills provided under the current programme, however, they would recommend to make it more precise and understandable to substitute "...activities in economics for the improvement of economic theories" by "...activities in economics for the adding value to of economic theories" as currently, it is quite disputable whether economic theories need improvement. Successful graduates are awarded "Doctor of Science (PhD) in Economics and Business" in accordance with Cabinet Regulations No. 202 "Procedures by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued" and also Cabinet Regulation No. 49.

The study programme has several main objectives and tasks outlining necessary knowledge, skills and competencies corresponding to the eighth EQF level (Cabinet Regulation No. 322 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education"). Objectives, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme are clearly defined corresponding to the order of the Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 345 "On the Conceptual Report "On the Implementation of a New Doctoral Model in Latvia" of 25.06.2020". The program contributes to enhancing the competitiveness of Latvia and participation in the EU innovation processes by educating academic staff and specialists with an innovative approach and high research capacity.

The admission of students is based on regulatory laws and legislation including the Cabinet of

Ministers Regulations No. 846 (as of 10 October 2006) “Regulations regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes”. Prerequisites for admission to the programme are transparent and ensure the entrants of the programme with the appropriate level of knowledge and skills. Students with a Master’s degree in social sciences, humanities, education, or natural sciences, or equivalent higher education are admitted to the doctoral study programme. Admission rules are clearly defined and publicly available at the website of DU <https://du.lv/en/studies-admission/admission/>.

Foreign applicants have to pass the English language proficiency test in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 846 “Regulations Regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes”.

Studies are conducted in the national language and in the English language in full (3 years) and part-time (4 years) forms. Criteria for pre-defence and defence of Doctoral thesis are clearly formulated in accordance with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia (No. 1001, 27.12.2005) “Procedure and Criteria for Awarding a Doctoral Degree (Promotion)”, p. 15.1) and after successful defence of thesis graduates are awarded a Doctoral degree of the Doctor of Science (PhD) in Economics and Business. The data presented to the experts’ panel shows a stable number of enrolled students from 2–5 per year, the number of graduates also remains stable with 1-2 per year.

The programme has a strong scientific aspect, during the study process students are actively involved in projects, take an active part in the work of the DU International Conference Organizing Committee, publish scientific articles and participate in a research project in cooperation with the supervisor adding value to the sustainable economic development of the local business community.

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

In general, it can be concluded the name of the study programme Doctoral study programme “Economics” (51311), learning outcomes, and admission requirements are logically interrelated.

Strengths:

The programme structure, aims, tasks and learning outcomes are aiming to contribute to the sustainable economic development of the local business community.

Weaknesses:

The formulation of the aim of the study programme is slightly clumsy.

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

### **Analysis**

DSP “Economics”, (51311) was developed in line with the need for more intensive renewal of research human capital as stated in the Guidelines for Science, Technology Development and Innovation for 2021-2027 taking into consideration the demand for highly educated research specialists fostering collaboration between public research and the business sector in developing innovation.

The aim, task and learning outcomes of the study programme correspond to the eighth EQF level enabling graduates to “demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research”. The structure of the DSP “Economics” complies with the laws and regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia, which govern and regulate the procedure for obtaining a scientific degree.

The programme comprises 120 CP in total with 34 CP dedicated to theoretical and practical courses,

72 CP - to the elaboration of Doctoral thesis and methodological seminars on Doctoral theses 18 CP (4 CP added to Doctoral students from abroad to study the Latvian language). These courses are divided into three parts: Part A - compulsory for all Doctoral students 40 CP, Part B specialization (individual research work according to the sub-branch of the Doctoral study programme in economics) - 68 CP, optional part C according to the sub-branch of economics - 12 CP. The content of the programme is interrelated and has a logical structure, starting with theoretical courses students pass to the more specialized ones once constantly working on the elaboration of a Doctoral thesis. Research is an integral and inevitable part of the program, the main research directions of the Doctoral programme are "Regional economics", "Finance and Credit". Since the very beginning of their studies, students are involved in research and development activities of the DU by giving classes to Bachelor and Master Students, being involved in various projects contributing to the development of PhD thesis, making research of real-life business-related problems as well as promoting cooperation in the field of innovation in order to improve the sustainable development of ecology in Europe. Students are encouraged to take an active part in scientific and scientific-practical domestic and foreign conferences (9th International Scientific Conference "Public Management 2020. The Contemporary Problems of Management, Defense and Security). Annually a scientific conference is organized by DU, giving students a valuable opportunity to present the results of their research and elaborate on the joint publication with the academic staff. During their studies, students generally have several publications in a highly rated academic journal prepared in tight cooperation with their supervisors.

All study courses are relevant and constantly updated, implementing various modern study methods like PBL, collaborative and competence learning etc. The expert commission would recommend considering enhancing the PhD programme in the area of practical pedagogical experience by adding pedagogic internship to the content of courses, which would add value to the education process in the DU. During their studies, students have an opportunity to use the library and all available scientific databases like Scopus, WOS, EBSCO, get feedback and full support from the teaching staff also via Moodle or Zoom. Students get full support from DU during their studies, for instance, DU provides support for the scientific and practical activities of lecturers by annually organizing the "Daugavpils University research project competition" enhancing the research skills of students.

During the period of 2013-2020, 17 Doctoral theses have been successfully defended on the topics related to relevant and challenging social, economic and financial problems of Latvia and the EU. The research competencies, knowledge and skills of graduate are highly valued by employers. This is also evident from the fact that graduates of the program make successful careers not only in HEIs but also take leading roles in state and local government organizations contributing to the sustainable development of the Latgale region as nearly 80% of the DSP "Economics" students are employed in Eastern Latvia.

Surveys of stakeholders opinion in the form of questionnaire is conducted systematically on an annual basis aiming to evaluate the content of the programme, define the areas of improvement for the programme and the overall level of satisfaction. Students are asked to give their feedback on each course evaluating teaching quality, overall satisfaction, the effectiveness of the lecturers' work style, etc. However, it should be noted that a survey is used as the main tool to get feedback from relevant stakeholders. The expert panel would recommend to consider the wide implementation of other methods like round-tables, brainstorming, interviews etc. of receiving feedback from all groups of stakeholders.

Received feedback is summarized and analysed by the administration. In case changes and improvements of the study, the programme is required, they are discussed by Study Direction Council and implemented. Results of recent surveys indicate that a program is constantly updated taking into consideration students' interest in the field of research and topicalities and tight connection of the theory with practical research activities. Results of the latest survey indicated that

80% of alumni are totally satisfied with the programme and 62% consider the number of visiting lecturers attracted to be sufficient. Graduates also expressed a high level of satisfaction with their cooperation with teaching staff, which was also confirmed during the meeting with the expert group. During the course, students are offered to participate in the Erasmus+ mobility program. They are kept constantly informed on the opportunities available for the current academic year. DU has numerous agreements concluded with foreign HEIs and applications can be submitted by students according to the stipulated procedure. Applications are reviewed and approved by the Council of studies. Courses taken in foreign HEIs are recognized in DU. During the meetings, it became obvious that students are aware of mobility opportunities, but due to the fact that students mostly combine work and studies, the overall level of incoming and outgoing student mobility remains low.

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

In general, it can be concluded that the content of all courses taught under the programme supports the achievement of the intended learning outcomes to educate professional specialists with theoretical and practical skills as well as high research potential well prepared for independent and innovative academic, research and practical work contributing to the sustainable development of the region.

Strengths:

1. A very good understanding of the mission and vision of the programme and its place in the innovative development of the Latgale region.
2. Wide range of opportunities offered to students to enhance their research skills.

Weaknesses:

1. Low level of incoming and outgoing mobility of students.
2. Lack of pedagogical and didactical courses and internships in the study programme.
3. A survey is used as the main tool to get feedback from relevant stakeholders.

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

#### **Analysis**

The University of Daugavpils has developed broad information and technical base that ensures the quality of the Doctoral study programme “Economics”. The study programme is implemented mainly in the building in Parādes 1, Daugavpils, which is the location of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Students have access to computer rooms, rooms for consultations and meetings and conference rooms, which are equipped with the necessary technical equipment (SAR, p.44-46, Tour of the facilities). The library is accredited and is included in the Library Register of the Ministry of Culture (SAR, p.46). It is filled with industry-specific literature, offers the help of qualified library staff and has 60 working places, 20 of them equipped with computers. It is adjusted for persons with reduced mobility, offers an ergonomic desk with adjustable height, equipment for persons with visual impairments, wireless internet access and printing, scanning and copying equipment (SAR, p.46-47; Meeting with the library staff). Students also have the opportunity to order information resources from the National Library of Latvia and other state libraries (SAR, p.46-47; Library webpage). Numerous academic databases are available to students on the University’s computers and also with remote access – Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO, Science Direct, Cambridge Journals Online. Several business databases are also available on the University’s computers – Latvijas standarts, Lursoft, NOZARE.LV and LETA (SAR, p.48; Library webpage).

However, there are instances when the mandatory literature is not available in the library, for example, “Financial institutions, markets, and money” by David S. Kidwell in the study course “Latest Developments and Research in the Field of Finance”. The English version of this particular

example of literature is also not available in the joint library catalogue (Joint catalogue). In other cases, the mandatory literature is not available in the catalogue of the University of Daugavpils but is available in the joint library catalogue. There are also instances of mandatory literature being available in the library, but only in one copy, for example, "International financial management" by Jeff Madura in the same study course "Latest Developments and Research in the Field of Finance" (SAR, Annex "Descriptions of the study courses"; Library catalogue). This particular information source is also shared with the Master's programme. The availability of the mandatory literature should be reviewed to ensure that all the students of a particular study course have access to the sources indicated as compulsory reading.

The premises of the University of Daugavpils include lecture rooms that have the necessary equipment for audio and video projection, computer rooms supplied with an Internet connection, software and the applicable technical resources necessary for the provision of studies (SAR, p.104; Tour of the facilities).

Doctoral students have access to specialised programs that facilitate the research work - quantitative data processing software IBM SPSS Statistics, visualisation application Microsoft Visio, process modelling application AllFusion Process Modeler, simulation software Vensim, numeric computing environment MatLab and geographic information system (GIS) (SAR, p.103). However, the students do not have the opportunity to work with software for qualitative data analysis and a tool for research surveys, data processing and analysis.

Moodle platform is actively used in the study process and contains sufficient information for students to reach their study goals (Meeting with students). The professors are provided with methodological seminars to develop remote-teaching skills (SAR, p.42) and are financially motivated to improve the study resource availability on the Moodle platform (Meeting with HEI management). The University of Daugavpils has also ensured a resource base for conducting remote learning studies - Zoom software and Moodle platform adjusted for more extensive use (SAR, p.42; Meeting with HEI management, students).

The Doctoral students are provided with the necessary support for the implementation of their scientific work, and during the site visit, they also appraised the provided resources and materials (Meeting with graduates). To further facilitate the scientific work of Doctoral students the University of Daugavpils offers them internal grants for research (Meeting with HEI management, meeting with graduates).

An international scientific conference "Social Sciences for Regional Development" is organized annually, which provides an opportunity to cooperate with other scientific and higher education institutions and create a network of links with students, researchers and scientists from different countries. The University of Daugavpils has signed cooperation agreements with other research and educational institutions both in Latvia and abroad - the University of Latvia, Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, International Business School of Kaunas University and Kazimieras Simonavičius University in Lithuania, European University in Georgia, Nikolaus Copernicus University in Poland, Vitebsk State University in Belarus and others. In cooperation with other universities, the Doctoral students have an opportunity to elaborate project applications and participate in a consortium aimed at improving sustainable development in ecology in Central and Eastern European regions. The cooperation with other institutions also includes reviewing scientific articles and projects, reviewing Doctoral theses, participating in editorial boards of scientific journals and article collections and writing joint articles with co-authors (SAR, p.104-105). A few foreign lecturers are involved in the implementation of the study programme (SAR, Annex "Study course descriptions").

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

The infrastructure and resources available to students ensure a qualitative study process, enable reaching the programme's learning outcomes and comply with the programme's conditions and features. Students have access to academic databases, specialised software and applications designed for research work, library, computer classrooms, lecture rooms, Moodle platform that offers remote access to study materials, and the help of qualified library staff. Lecture rooms and computer rooms are equipped with all the necessary equipment. The study programme has several partners in Latvia and abroad, that ensure guest lecturers, researchers, access to different environments and networking opportunities.

Strengths:

1. Well-established resource base and infrastructure that ensures a qualitative study process, enables reaching the programme's learning outcomes and complies with the programme's conditions and features.
2. Academic databases and the time-intensive quantitative data processing software IBM SPSS Statistics is accessible remotely.

Weakness:

1. In terms of specialised programmes designed for research, students do not have the opportunity to work with software for qualitative data analysis and a tool for research surveys, data processing and analysis.
2. Some study course descriptions include mandatory literature, which is not available in the library.

#### **4. Teaching Staff**

##### **Analysis**

DU has set criteria on the basis of which the selection of academic staff for the provision of study courses in the doctoral program. These criteria are appropriate education, academic or scientific degree, professional experience, research and publications in the relevant field, research in the field of economics and finance and participation in projects (SAR, pp. 105-106). In the period since the last accreditation, there were not many personnel changes in the implementation of courses, in one of the two cases it was retirement and the course was taken over by a new teacher selected on the basis of the prescribed criteria.

DU makes efforts to acquire as many guest lecturers from abroad as possible, which it succeeds mainly through networking in the ERASMUS + program and at various international scientific conferences and by participating in projects. The documentation describes some successful examples of such reciprocal hosting at both universities, which was also confirmed by interviews with academic staff. The data on the number of lecturers in the doctoral programme does not match in the SAR and in the annex (docetaju saraksts valodas). The SAR lists 15 teachers, and the table in the annex lists 14 teachers, the rector's statements also refer to this number. Among the providers in this program are 5 professors, 4 associate professors, 2 docents, 4 leading researchers and researchers, including 12 lecturers whose primary employment is DU. The professors for the economy are not primarily employed at DU. All academic staff has the required doctoral education. As can be seen from the table (annex - docetaju saraksts valodas), seven of these academic staff also teach courses in the first and second cycle programs at the faculty, only three have courses only in the doctoral program. What is somewhat surprising is the number of courses taught by some academic staff - as many as three have more than 25 courses on the list, one of which even 36, delivering them in all three programs. Only in the doctoral program, however, two lecturers teach as many as 20 or 16 courses. This raises not only the question of the pedagogical workload of individual teachers but also the time available for quality research work and to support students. Otherwise, all the teachers present at the interviews stated that the pedagogical obligations are

acceptable and that they do not feel the lack of time for research work. They are satisfied with the work environment and especially with systematical support for research work and scientific publications.

The involvement of teachers in pedagogical training and internship is not systematically regulated, but takes place mostly in the form of placement training at partner universities abroad in connection with projects and attending courses from European projects of individual choice.

The qualification and the structure of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study program comply with the requirements specified in the Law on Higher Education Institutions. The doctoral study program is in compliance with the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments, as the academic staff of the study direction "Economics" and the doctoral study program "Economics" is composed of 14 doctors, 8 of whom are experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science in the branch or sub-branch of the study program grant a scientific degree (annex - statement of the rector). There is also evidence that the members of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study program "Economics" meet the requirements specified in Law on Institutions of Higher Education, Section 55, Article 1, Paragraph 3 (annex - statement of the rector, Annex - CV of academic staff in the doctoral programme). No information on academic staff CV and bibliography is available on the DU website.

Academic staff is selected on the basis of their professional, research and pedagogical achievements, on the basis of which they can make a quality contribution to the development of students and to their research work and scientific publications. The documentation (SAR p.106) gives an example of a visiting professor, the editor-in-chief of several scientific journals indexed in the SCOPUS database, who can have a positive effect on the quality and number of scientific publications of doctoral students. There is also documented, how some members of academic staff cooperate together under specific projects and develop new teaching tools. The result of the professional, pedagogical and research work of academic staff, which they implement in their courses, is clearly reflected in the success of doctoral students, of which some successfully publish in demanding scientific journals and are able to carry out complex research.

Academic staff in the doctoral program is also involved in various DU projects to improve their own competencies. In interviews with academic staff, we learned (which also follows from the documentation) that 4 teachers within the ESF project improved their competencies in the English language.

Academic staff in the doctoral programme managed to publish numerous scientific publications during the reporting period, and over 100 of them were published in journals indexed in the SCOPUS and WoS databases. As some of them also have the functions of editors and members of the programme committees, they gain a lot of quality experience in the preparation and publication of scientific articles, which can greatly benefit them as an aid to doctoral students in providing quality publications. Even doctoral students have published independently or in collaboration with teachers in quality scientific editions. Some teachers achieved a high science evaluation criterion Hirsch index. (SAR, p. 107). In the documentation, there is detailed evidence (annex - List of scientific peer-reviewed publications of the DU academic staff related to the study programmes in the study field "Economics") about all academic staff of this programme and their science evaluation criterion.

Academic staff in the doctoral programme are mainly focused on the quality of delivering the study program, which includes many other activities, from research and publishing, participation in international conferences and events, cooperation with the business environment to student support and participation in various projects. The documentation specifies in details the research projects in which they are involved or are led by some doctoral program teachers. In the field of business and investment climate, three international and local research projects are listed with the names of project managers, as well as in the field of smart growth in the context of the knowledge economy. The recent project is related to the circumstances regarding the consequences of COVID 19 Pandemic and is being implemented within the national research program "RECOVERY - LV", and in

cooperation with researchers from Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies in the sub-project "Opportunities to Increase the Productivity and Competitiveness of the National Economy as an Economic System in the Conditions of the Covid-19 Pandemic".

There are several detailed explained examples (SAR p.107-110) of the involvement of academic staff and doctoral students in research projects that help students acquire and improve research skills and influence the research of both theoretical and applied aspects for industry, which are useful and mostly used in the implementation of study courses.

Academic staff in the doctoral program participate intensively with each other in the preparation and implementation of the study program, in the preparation of scientific publications and study materials, at international conferences, research projects, with students and colleagues from other departments of DU or from other universities. They regularly cooperate with each other in the process of improving the content and implementation of the study program and curricula, which takes place every year. Forms of cooperation are both formal (various meetings of departments and programme, different bodies and annual meeting of all academic staff) and informal, most often when it comes to the implementation of various activities and projects. Peer evaluation in the classroom, as well as with research work, was highlighted as a good practice. At the interview, academic staff expressed satisfaction with the fact, that two or more teachers are engaged in the implementation of study courses, but some would like to expose even more project-based work in interaction.

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

The DU has set criteria on the basis of which the selection of academic staff for the provision of study courses in the doctoral programme has no negative effects on the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments, and it enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. The number and the structure of academic staff are appropriate, but there is no professor of the economy who would be an employee of DU. Some academic staff have an enormous number of courses in the programme and in other programmes at the Faculty. In general, academic staff are very loyal and motivated and satisfied with working conditions and with the support, they are receiving for their research and scientific work. The pedagogical internship is not systematically supported, but there are some good practices in collaboration among academic staff. Formal and informal collaboration contributes to the improvement of the programme. The scientific publications and the involvement in research projects have shown significant progress both in terms of numbers and international inclusion. The results of scientific publications of doctoral students indicate the good quality of the program.

Strengths:

1. Very motivated and loyal academic staff
2. Good practice in collaboration - peer evaluation in the classroom and in the scientific production, joint scientific publications
3. Significant progress in the field of scientific publications, involvement in international projects, transfer of innovations in the implementation of the program
4. Involvement of students in research projects and joint publishing.

Weaknesses:

1. The pedagogical internship is not systematically supported.
2. The website does not contain information about the achievements of academic staff, including

their CV and bibliographies.

3. The number of courses per academic staff in the programme is very high in some cases.
4. There is no own professor position in the economy at DU.

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Economics"

### Requirements

1. The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT submitted for evaluation purpose complies with the Cabinet Regulation 202.
2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** STATEMENT submitted to the expert panel for evaluation purpose in the form of an appendix confirms that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.
3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Agreement on the compensation of losses provides full coverage of losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution.
4. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** CVs of teaching staff, information received during the visit confirmed that 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.
5. The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant  
**Justification:** The expert panel was presented STATEMENT OF CONFORMITY provided by the DU to the expert panel for evaluation purposes. CVs of teaching staff provided by the DU. However, evidence received during the visit and interviews with teaching staff revealed a low level of knowledge of the English language.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Basic information on the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study direction in the form of annex - Nine lecturers are experts of the Latvian Council of Science in the field "Social sciences", one is an LCS expert in the field "Social sciences - law" and one - an LCS expert in the field "Social sciences - psychology". (SAR, p.105-111, anenex - regarding scientific publications, annex - CV of the academic staff)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education Basis information stated in SER, annexes and evidence received during the visit.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The sample of the study agreement partially complies with 27.01.2007. Regulation No70 of Minister Cabinet "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi/ Mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement" complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** 15 highly qualified lecturers are engaged in the implementation of the DSP "Economics": 5 professors, 4 associate professors, 2 docents, 4 leading researchers and researchers, including 12 lecturers whose primary employment is DU. Criteria for selecting lecturers for the provision of study courses in the programme comply with legislation and are: appropriate education, academic or scientific degree, professional experience, research and creative activities (publications in the relevant field, research in the field of economics and finance, participation in projects). Nine lecturers are experts of the Latvian Council of Science in the field "Social sciences. Economics and Entrepreneurship", one is an LCS expert in the field "Social sciences - law" and one - an LCS expert in the field "Social sciences - psychology". (SER, p.105-111, anenex - regarding scientific publications, annex - CV of the academic staff)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** CVs of teaching staff, List of the publications, patents, and artistic creations of the teaching staff over the reporting period. Information received during the visit justified that each member of the academic staff has publications published in reviewed academic journals in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** SAR, Annexes provided by the DU, evidence received during the visit and interviews with all stakeholders justified that in general mostly all the related requirements for the study programme have been met. However, the expert panel detected several partial compliances like, - Low level of foreign language knowledge among the DU academic staff. Therefore, the expert panel should recommend improving the overall level of English language among the academic staff of DU.

## Requirements (R6-R8)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Facilities and resources observed during the site visit were a solid justification of the compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** 15 highly qualified lecturers are engaged in the implementation of the DSP "Economics": 5 professors, 4 associate professors, 2 docents, 4 leading researchers and researchers, including 12 lecturers whose primary employment is DU. Criteria for selecting lecturers for the provision of study courses in the programme comply with legislation and are: appropriate education, academic or scientific degree, professional experience, research and creative activities (publications in the relevant field, research in the field of economics and finance, participation in projects). Nine lecturers are experts of the Latvian Council of Science in the field "Social sciences. Economics and Entrepreneurship", one is an LCS expert in the field "Social sciences - law" and one - an LCS expert in the field "Social sciences - psychology". (SER, p.105-111, anenex - regarding scientific publications, annex - CV of the academic staff)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Having reviewed the topicality of the of PhD thesis - their relevance and tight relation with modern economic processes in the region, description of study courses, and the study program content, which includes contemporary disciplines the expert panel considers that this serves as a valid justification that this study is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

### Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

In general, it can be concluded, that mostly all the related requirements for the study programme have been met. However, the expert panel detected several partial compliances like Low level of foreign language among the DU academic staff and the agreement on the compensation of losses provides only partial coverage of losses. Therefore, the expert panel should recommend to improve the overall level of English language among the academic staff of DU and incorporating the full coverage of losses into the agreement on the compensation of losses.

The expert panel has observed the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths:

The program structure, aims, tasks and learning outcomes are aiming to contribute to the sustainable economic development of the local business community.

Very good understanding of the mission and vision of the programme and its place in the innovative development of the Latgale region.

Wide range of opportunities offered to students to enhance their research skills.

A well-established resource base and infrastructure that ensures a qualitative study process, enables reaching the programme's learning outcomes and complies with the programme's conditions and features.

Academic databases and the time-intensive quantitative data processing software IBM SPSS Statistics is accessible remotely.

Very motivated and loyal academic staff

Good practice in collaboration - peer evaluation in the classroom and in the scientific production, joint scientific publications

Significant progress in the field of scientific publications, involvement in international projects, transfer of innovations in the implementation of the program

Involvement of students in research projects and joint publishing

Weaknesses

1. The formulation of the aim of the study programme is slightly clumsy.

2. Low level of incoming and outgoing mobility of students.
3. Lack of pedagogical and didactical courses and internships in the study programme.
4. Survey is used as the main tool to get feedback from relevant stakeholders.
5. In terms of specialised programs designed for research, students do not have the opportunity to work with software for qualitative data analysis and a tool for research surveys, data processing and analysis.
6. Some study course descriptions include mandatory literature, which is not available in the library.
7. Some study course descriptions share the same information sources indicated as mandatory literature, which could lead to possible overlap of the study content not only among the study courses in the Doctoral study programme but also with study courses in the Master's study programme.
8. Ensure that all study course descriptions include mandatory literature, which is available in the library in a sufficient number of copies.
9. Descriptions of study courses implemented in English contain mandatory literature in Latvian.
10. Pedagogical internship not systematically supported.
11. The website does not contain information about the achievements of academic staff, including their CV and bibliographies.
12. Number of courses per academic staff in the programme is very high in some cases.
13. Full professor for the economy is not full time employed at DU
14. Limited knowledge of the English language among teaching staff.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Economics"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Economics"**

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

- |  |
|--|
| 1 Use more possibilities to attract foreign students within the framework of the Erasmus+ program.   |
| 2. Consider wide implementation of other methods like round-tables, brainstorming, interviews etc. of receiving feedback from all groups of stakeholders.  |
| 3. Establish a system that will enable quality pedagogical internship for academic staff involved in the doctoral program.   |
| 4. Update the website so that information about academic staff is accessible - a link to their professional CVs and to their bibliography and projects.  |
| 5. Assess the optimal number of study courses taught by an individual teacher in the program in connection with the quality of implementation and in relation to the research and other obligations of the individual. |
| 6. Create a position of the Full Professor in Economy.   |
| 7. Improve the overall level of the English language among the academic staff of DU.   |

9. Slightly rephrase the aim of the study programme to make it unquestionable and understandable for everyone by substituting the words "...activities in economics for the improvement of economic theories" by "...activities in economics for the adding value to of economic theories".

### Long-term recommendations

1. Review a possibility to provide students with access to software for qualitative data analysis and a tool for research surveys, data processing and analysis.

2. Review the indicated mandatory literature and ensure the availability of all sources, which are listed as compulsory reading, to all students of a particular study course.

3. Consider enhancing the PhD programme in the area of practical pedagogical experience by adding pedagogic internship to the content of courses.

4. Review the indicated mandatory literature to ensure that the same source, which is used in several study courses, does not lead to overlapping study content. In case different parts of the same source are used for different study courses, indicate the parts or pages of the source, which is the intended compulsory reading for the particular study course.

5. Review the indicated mandatory literature for study courses implemented in English to ensure that information sources in English are listed for the compulsory reading.

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

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

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

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation	Comment
Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:	Fully compliant	DU ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems, which is justified by the prospective evaluation of the study direction and study programmes taking into account the tasks of Latvia in the implementation of the common strategies of the European Union as of May 16, 2020. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF DAUGAVPILS UNIVERSITY, 2015-2020.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.	Fully compliant		The experts were provided with the "List of cooperation agreements for study field „Economics” outlining cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction. During the visit it became evident that cooperation is also present in the development of study programs; study process improvement and the development of scientific research; Internship placements
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).	Fully compliant		The conclusions were based on the CVs of teaching staff received prior to the visit as well as the List of the publications, patents, and artistic creations of the teaching staff over the reporting period presented to the expert panel justifies compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof. Information received during the visit also confirms full compliance.
R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.	Fully compliant		DU presented the document named "Overview of the implementation of the provided recommendations provided by the DU", which shows shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction and the implementation of the provided recommendations.

### 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)

<b>No.</b>	<b>Study programme</b>	<b>R5</b>	<b>R6</b>	<b>R7</b>	<b>R8</b>	<b>Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)</b>
1	Business and Financial Processes (42311)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
2	Smart Economics and Innovation (47311)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
3	Economics (51311)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

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

none