Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Rīga Stradiņš University

Study field: Social Welfare

Experts:
1. Iveta Reinholde (Chair of the Experts Group)
2. Juha Hämäläinen (Secretary of the Experts Group)
3. Rūta Butkevičienė
4. Rūdolfs Aleksandrs Strods (Student Union of Latvia)
5. Ieva Antonsone (Employers' Confederation of Latvia)

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

The group of experts formed to assess the study field "Social Work" and the three relevant study programmes under the field at the Riga Stradins University (further on - RSU) examined the provided self-assessment report (SAR) prepared by the university and participated in evaluation on-site visit to the university. Due to the limits of the COVID 19 pandemic, three experts participated in the visit in person, while the remaining two participated in the assessment visit via the online conference tool Zoom. As a result of the reading of the SAR, the discussions and questions raised during the on-site visit, as well as the follow up questions and explanations, the expert group prepared a joint report.

In the report, the group of experts assess the compliance of the study field and study programmes according to the relevant requirements and criteria for such programmes. They highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each component and suggest possible steps to be implemented to ensure the sustainability and improvement of the evaluated programmes and study field in general.

The opinion of the expert group is very positive regarding both the study field and the programmes. The evaluated programmes fit the need of the society on the local/regional and broader–country level. Graduates of each study programme meet the current demand of the labour market. In general, the strategic goals of RSU are met on a good level as well. Basic tools and mechanisms ensuring quality control of study process and research along with ethical standards are addressed sufficiently.

The study programmes have a solid basis and provide good preparation for graduates. At the same time attention must be paid to the existing risks, which could endanger the programmes and their sustainability, especially too many courses with small number of points. The larger building blocks of courses may bring some value like easier to manage. Also, there is room for improved coordination among teaching staff, especially regarding their expectations of assignments.

The expert group has analysed the internal quality assurance system and has come up with an opinion that the internal quality assurance system of studies is effective. The quality assessment system is purposeful even though the RSU has an impressive number of tools for quality assurance.

RSU offers two levels of study programme: professional bachelor (BA) level programme "Social work", professional master (MA) level programme "Social Work" and joint master level programme "Social Work with Children and Youth".

The BA programme is offered to graduates of high schools. It provides general social work on the basic level with a strong influence from medicine. The BA programme is expected to be reviewed from the perspective of considering changes regarding the time devoted to the course in medicine.

The MA programme of "Social work'" can be understood as a continuation of a professional BA in "Social Work". MA might become a potential change-makers and policymakers in the field in the future.

Both programmes of "Social work" (BA and MA) are adequately structured and executed by a well prepared, professional cadre of lecturers. In addition, both programmes offer good professional knowledge and necessary skills.

The joint master's programme has a good structure and broad teaching staff from four universities. Since the programme is relatively young it cannot be fully evaluated.

HEI has established some useful connections and cooperation with domestic and international institutions. Emphasis needs to be put on the further development of this cooperation, in attracting more foreign lecturers, as well as stimulation of local students, to utilize the existing ERASMUS+ programme to experience study abroad options.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

I - Assessment of the Study Field

1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1. The RSU aims to be a wordwide recognized modern and prestiguous HEI that educates high-quality health and social sciences professionals for the needs of the future job market. Thus, RSU develops the content and implementation of training programmes in cooperation with representatives of working life. Multidisciplinarity is emphasized in RSU's strategy. RSU has a total of 10 study directions (StD), including 72 degree programs (StP). The StD "Social Welfare" currently under evaluation consists of three StPs in social work. The number of students in the StD has been more or less constant over the last seven years. The employment situation of graduates is relatively good, but the sector is plagued by the low prestige of social work profession in society, which has led to a somewhat reduced interest in studying the sector.

According to the SAR, the goals of the study field are clearly defined and are in line with the RSU's vision and strategy (SAR, pp. 4-11). The interconnection of the study programmes in the field of study is logical and the field forms its own clear and appropriate entity in the RSU's interdisciplinary study structures. Opportunities for the participation of external partners, students and structural units in the decision-making and management are considered (SAR, pp. 8-10) as well as the tasks of maniging parties of the study field discribes appropprately (SAR, 10-12). Both the SAR and the audit show that management at different levels of administration as well as relevant stakeholders are committed to the development of the field of study and understand its importance. There seems to be a clear enough view of the division of responsibilities and roles of management staff for the development of the field of study.

1.1.2. The SAR (pp. 22-26) includes a comprehensive SWOT analysis, which provides an illuminating picture of how those who participated in the SWOT process see the current state and development conditions of the study field from different perspectives. Both strengths and development needs have been identified with thought. Maintaining the stability of strengths and reducing weaknesses has been considered. However, a more comprehensive and detailed examination of the identified weaknesses and threats would have provided a more convincing picture for the assessment that their reduction has indeed been considered. Now it is necessary to ask how informed and appropriate the use of SWOT analysis has been for reflecting what should be done about the challenges identified.

The SWOT analysis, for example, highlights many weaknesses for students (lack of interest in research, difficulties for part-time students to combine studies and work, full-time students' lack of time, communication problems between students and department lecturers, and even frequent fatique syndrome), but the possible resolution or mitigation of these has hardly been addressed in the SAR. Possible actions by the university to mitigate the identified threats have also not been

addressed.

1.1.3 The management, responsibility, and decision-making sructures of the study field are clearly described in the SAR (pp. 7-11), including the roles of administrative and technical personnel to ensure the needs of degree program. Students and external partners are involved in the decision-making and administrative processes, which offers good opportunities to form a broad understanding of the development needs of StD and individual StPs. National and international co-operation with stakeholders and other universities is a significant resource that contributes to achieving the goals of the study field in line with RSU's vision and strategy and the management is committed to the long-term development of the field of study at all levels of adminstration. The management is appropriately organized within the framework of laws and regulations.

1.1.4 The SAR (pp. 28-30) indicates that studies under the StD are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations, including the admission of students' previous studies and work experience. Internal procedures for processing students' applications for recognition of previous professional experience and educational achievements are appropriate. RSU has admission regulations for each level of studies. The procedure is described in detail in RSU Adnmission Procedure, which is available on RSU web site. This document containes for example a list of laws and regulations related to admission, study programs, application deadlines, requirements, assessments, and the rights and responsibilities of the student applicant. Admission to the University is carried out in conformity with: Education Law; the Law on Institutions of Higher Education; Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No.846 of 10 October 2006 - Regulations on the requirements, criteria and procedure for the admission to the study programmes; Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No.203 of 27 March 2007 – Procedure for Preparing and Updating Student Files; Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No.276 of 25 June 2019 – Regulations on State Education Information System; Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No.543 of 29 September 2015 – Regulations on the Replacement of Foreign Language Centralized Examination in General Secondary Education Programme with an Examination by an Internationally Recognised [Language] Testing Institution; and the procedure and other regulatory enactment. The information about the application procedure is clear, detailled, comprehensive and easily accessible throughout, including descptions of the internal precedures for processing students' applications for recognition of previous professional experience and educational achievements. The knowledge, skills and competencies acquired with professional experience through working in the field of social welfare are recognized in accordance with the Cabinet Regulations No. 505 and RSU Regulations.

1.1.5. Correspondingly, the methods, principles and procedures for assessing students' learning outcomes and their responding to the learning objectives of the study field are in accordance with the the laws and guidelines (SAR, pp. 12-13, 28-30). The necessary administrative structures and internal regulations of the RSU for monitoring are in place.

The SAR certificates that the assessment procedure for assessing each student's academic achievements and learning outcomes is incorporated in the description of each study course and analysed twice per academic year after the end of the study semester and a result of monitoring academic success, risks to successful study process and reasons for exclusion are identified, on the basis of which it is possible to take preventive actions (SAR, pp. 12-13 and Annex No. 1, Process Description No. 6). The fact that the experts of the international project "Peer-Assessment of Student Centred Learning" (PASCL) described RSU as a student-centred HEI shows that the assessment system is working well and is truly student-centred.

In the study of social work, the use of distance learning must be carefully considered, because in

addition to the mere sharing of knowledge, there is a lot of content to be discussed in the studies, such as professional ethics and the application of theory to practice. There is a danger that efforts to increase time resources (SAR, p. 26) will lead to the use of inappropriate methods in terms of learning objectives and content. It fits hardly, for example, in with the desire expressed by students in auditing for more interactive and conversational teaching. The impact of the effort on students' learning outcomes and their assessment should be assessed proactively in detail.

1.1.6. With regard to academic integrity, RSU has developed its own Code of Ethics and established an Ethics Committee to identify and address scientific misconduct. According to the SAR (pp. 31-32), students are comprehensively informed about the ethical principles of scientific work at different stages of the studies and are required to use Turnitin plagiarism detection tool for their theses. Procedures for dealing with plagiarism are clear.

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

Management is appropriate and works reliably. The internal regulations and procedures of RSU are of a high standard and in line with national regulations for higher education institutions. The management structure of the StD and the StP is adequately oriented towards the development of the field as an appropriate responsibility and decision-making system. There is a functional system for the admission of students, the recognition of periods of study, work experience, and the assessment of student performance and learning outcomes as well as an appropriate system for assessing student performance by using student-centred assessment methods and procedures. In addition, the RSU has defined the principles of academic integrity and the mechanisms for adhering to them, as well as the means to properly combat plagiarism.

Strengths:
1. The study field forms a logical whole fitting into RSU's strategy.
2. The SWOT has been properly done.
3. The management structure at all administrative aspects and levels is development-oriented.
4. The admission of students has been carried out appropriately and excellently informed.
5. The assessment of students' learning achievements is student-centered and systematic.
6. Academic integrity system is adequate, well organized and managed in a satisfactory way.

Weaknesses:
1. The SWOT analysis has been used superficially and only partially.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1. The RSU has developed a robust quality assurance system and a comprehensive quality policy based on its strategy and core values: human, team, results and loyalty. It is also publicly accessible. (eng - https://www.rsu.lv/sites/default/files/documents/rsu_quality_policy_2016_ENG.pdf) Based on the previously mentioned values the 3 cornerstones of the quality assurance system are: a student-centred aproach, partnership (mostly focused on interactions between health and social sciences) and quality as a whole, which is results oriented. The order of regular actions taken by the management and academic staff are clearly outlined, logical and consequential and directly lead to the improvement of the study field. (SAR, pp. 34-35)

When it comes to the joint study programme 'Social Work with Children and Youth' (45762) each partner university is responsible for the study process in their own location, which also seems to include quality assurance, however, there is a common Governing Board where questions or issues that can not be resolved in the local HEI or are by nature common are resolved and worked on together. (On-site visit & ESWOCHY Student handbook 2021) Link: https://mruni-my.sharepoint.com/personal/r_vilniene_mruni_eu/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpe rsonal%2Fr%5Fvilniene%5Fmruni%5Feu%2FDocuments%2FESWOCHY%5FStudent%5FHandbook%2 Epdf&parent=%2Fpersonal%2Fr%5Fvilniene%5Fmruni%5Feu%2FDocuments&ga=1

1.2.2. All stakeholders during the on-site visit showed understanding and not only readiness to participate in the improvement of the study field but also could give multiple examples of how they already have impacted the studies, such as changes in the study courses, study materials, teaching methods etc. Their participation is well defined in such documents as the Quality Handbook, Study Process Quality Guidelines and others.

1.2.3. Both staff and students during the on-site visit showed high regard for academic integrity and there are mechanisms in place to ensure that it is not breached which are well developed and used efficiently (e.g. plagiarism checking system and different methods such as open book exams).

1.2.4. Both SAR and on-site visits showed that different kinds of data are used thoroughly in the improvement of the study field. Not only could RSU show the data but also a clear line was drawn between the results of the said data and changes in the study direction, such as improvements to the e-study platform (updates to the course descriptions, presentations etc.) but also identification of issues with academic staff (e.g. number complaints) and other issue identification. The library collects and analyses the data about the demand for specific books, categories of books and e-resources, and databases. All of this information is used to determine where the demand is for these different resources to make sure that everything necessary is accessible. The teaching staff and employers are involved in these sorts of decisions as well.

The RSU has identified the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG, which require special attention which is reflected in their study field analysis and general strategy. All stakeholder answers indicated that this is taken into consideration when developing the study field, such as involving both internal and external stakeholders in creating the quality assurance policy.

The RSU has high internal standards for designing and creating new study programmes such as set goals to be reached during the process, clear points when different stakeholders should be involved in the process as well as an internal feedback loop between the administrative and academic staff. The study programme is implemented with student centered learning in mind by ensuring that student diversity is respected and there are different paths that students can take to achieve professional and individual goals in their studies. All of the relevant documentation is available publicly and anyone can familiarize themselves with them.

1.2.5. The RSUs' webpage is well designed and all of the important information is immediately clearly visible (such as credit points, study length, Degree conferred etc.). (As an example: https://www.rsu.lv/en/study-programme/social-work-0) Both during the on-site visit and during the writing of this report the experts could not identify any cases where the information was not accurate to both, the real life situation, and official registers.

The RSU has high internal standards for designing and creating new study programmes such as set goals to be reached during the process, clear points when different stakeholders should be involved

in the process as well as an internal feedback loop between the administrative and academic staff. The study programme is implemented with student centered learning in mind by ensuring that student diversity is respected and there are different paths that students can take to achieve professional and individual goals in their studies. All of the relevant documentation is available publicly and anyone can familiarize themselves with them.

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

RSU has established a well defined, efficient quality policy that is open to all stakeholders while taking ESG into consideration when developing the study field. The quality policy contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field. All main procedures related to the development and review of the relevant study programmes and the feedback mechanisms (including opinions from the students, employers, and alumni) have been identified and properly managed.

Strengths:
1. The quality assurance system is exceptionally defined and used extremely efficiently.
2. Feedback by the stakeholders is taken into account for both identifying and solving issues.
3. Academic integrity is ensured efficiently and is thought about when implementing different teaching solutions.
4. ESG followed to improve the study quality.

Weaknesses:
1. None

Assessment of the requirement [1]

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   RSU has a fully operating study quality management system along with procedural documents. The amount of different quality assurance tools used is impressive in scope and content.
   All in all, the internal quality assurance system ensures student-centered and sustainable higher education. Internal quality assurance system in RSU is used well and efficiently to create the best conditions for further improvement to the study field.

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The quality policy has been approved and published. The relevant procedures of the internal quality assurance system are being updated on the regular basis. All in all, RSU has developed exceptional policies and procedures for ensuring the quality of higher education.

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

Internal and external quality assurance of higher education is ensured in cooperation with RSU, and the key stakeholders. The institutional network provides quality in issues like licencing and accreditation of the study programmes.

There are all necessary internal mechanisms operating for reliable and regular upgrade of study programmes like a study field council, self-evaluation reports, quality policy and internal procedures.

Based on the SAR and meetings with stakeholders and provided annexes (such as Management structure of the higher education institution) the mechanism are well developed.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Based on discussion during the on-site visit and the information provided in SAR the criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of students' results are well defined and clear. They are public as well.

All in all, the approach to the evaluation of students' results is directly linked to the intended learning outcomes

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

Necessary internal mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff are in place. Students, HEI management and study direction management assess the qualifications and work quality of academic staff on regular basis.

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

RSU collects and analysis the information related to the study achievements of the students; including employment of the graduates, satisfaction of the students, the efficiency of the teaching staff as well as the study funds available. All the necessary data is collected on a regular basis using many different means (see Chapter 2, Summary of the statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of the teaching staff over the reporting period and other similar annexes).

Data collection fits the general system of quality assurance and management of RSU and helps to measure the achievement of KPI.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

RSU uses wide spectrum of tools related to quality assurance.

The study field is already continuously developed and improved while implementing their quality assurance system.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1. Profitability in study programmes is a high priority for RSU. To ensure the financial support for the study direction in the long term, RSU evaluates various options like increase in places financed from the state budget; attraction of municipal funding and student admission every 2 years. As a result, a system for funding scientific and/or applied research is defined and implemented and it is considered to be effective.

1.3.2. During the meetings with students and teachers, as well as the tour of the facilities, the experts conclude, that the infrastructure of RSU is very well developed and modern, student-centred. Auditoriums are well-equipped with technical and IT solutions - with projectors, interactive whiteboards, free access to the internet and Wi-Fi, a sound system etc. Part of auditoriums is intended for simultaneous training.

There are several computer classrooms, where students have the opportunity to use computers with IT systems and internet resources. There are library and a reading room equipped for individual work. There is a modern and very well-equipped conference hall as well. Hallways are designed for students, there are informative electronic scoreboards as well as an information centre, wall signs to auditoriums etc., and there are places for rest and studying, even with special quiet rooms with sound absorption.

The e-studies environment is recognized and satisfied by both students and teaching staff. All students of different study programs experts met in meetings mentioned that the portal MyRSU together with Moodle is easy and fast to use in everyday life. All the necessary information about studies, and e-services is easy to find and use in the app. As mentioned in the Assessment of the information and methodological base in IT infrastructure (SAR, Annex 23.3.), in the last two years e-environment was the main basis of cooperation between the university and students and new improvements have been made regularly over time.

1.3.3. The needs of the teaching staff for professional and didactic improvement are identified in a target-oriented manner. The Centre for Educational Growth provides support for the improvement of the quality of studies by analysing the study process and organising pedagogical growth of academic staff in continuing education activities, updated each semester. To improve the lecturers' knowledge of the possibilities of this tool and to develop the skills for using it, RSU Centre for Educational Growth regularly organises practical training for lecturers and support staff on the benefits and use of this tool for checking, correcting students' independent work and providing feedback in the study courses, as well as for checking qualification and diploma papers at the end of the study programme. Lectures and seminars on the principles of academic integrity and mechanisms for their observation and checking are also provided to students during the study process. (SAR, p. 31)

The latest literature on the relevant fields is regularly purchased. According to SAR (p. 50), in the period from 2016 to 2021, RSU library funding for the subscription and purchase of different resources has increased by 162,300 EUR. Speaking directly about study field "Social Welfare" in last six years different books and e-books have been purchased for almost 15 500 Eur. (SAR, Annex 23.1, p.5)

Support for the study field "Social Welfare" both teaching and research are wide starting from different printed books and other recourses and access to large online databases of electronic full-

text journals and e-books, for example, Academic Collection (EBSCO), Ebook Central (Proquest), SAGE Premier 2022, Communication Source (EBSCO), PsycARTICLES (APA), BMJ Journals, etc. Viewing printed books in the library experts observed that there is a different and wide range of books relating to different fields, areas and target groups of social work, published in later and current years, most of them in English. During the meeting with students, experts observed that there were difficulties speaking and answering questions in English, which suggests that without support literature or specific texts may be difficult to read and understand. There were all the latest editions of books and magazines published in the Latvian language.

During the visit to the library, the teaching staff stated that they have an opportunity to apply for the literature required for their course or research needs, which was also confirmed by the library staff. As mentioned in the SAR (p. 47), the premises of libraries are accessible for visitors with reduced mobility not only in central but in other branches as well. This could also be seen by visiting the library on the tour of facilities by experts. Library specialists offer support for researchers and offer classes and individual consultations. As the e-environment at RSU is well developed, students can receive help with available library resources and apply for a visit not only in person but also remotely through various IT tools, such as help.rsu.lv, Calendly (SAR, p. 47).

The ability of RSU to introduce new tools for students and researchers can be assessed as good practice – in 2022 has been subscribed to Writefull tool, which provides recommendations for improving scientific texts (SAR, p. 51).

1.3.4. As an information and communication technology tool in the study process RSU uses the Moodle system, which is regularly updated. It includes a lot of different possibilities in the study process for teachers, students and administration as well. During the visit, the Moodle system was demonstrated, and experts were able to see how many and varied possibilities are included.

In meetings, the system users, both the teaching staff and the students were satisfied with the opportunities and benefits provided by this system. During the meeting with bachelor students from 1st and 2nd years, experts find out, that as the RSU e-environment respectively Moodle system is very well developed. Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic it was possible to combine studies with home life and full-time work. It was very comfortable to watch recordings of lectures and online seminars, find study materials that correspond to the content of the study course and submit individual works and receive feedback, take tests and find out the results of examinations. At the same time, they also pointed to a lack of face-to-face discussions, and reflections and they can't imagine how to acquire practical skills remotely.

1.3.5. According to the SAR (pp. 53-54), the teaching staff has an opportunity to learn different seminars and courses in continuous learning and get consultations on teaching and learning methods (platforms, systems, applications etc.) as well as the optimal selection of e-learning support tools while IT service centre provides individual support issues. It is also worth mentioning the whole IT system, e-environment, mobile applications, etc. which during the meeting at RSU were highly valued by both current and former local and international students, as well as lecturers.

The university has defined and developed internal procedures and mechanisms for attracting qualified teachers. The application and selection procedure of the academic staff in RSU is regulated by:
1)Regulations on Academic Elections (approved at the meeting of the Senate of Riga Stradins University on June 15, 2021, prot. No. 2-1 / 6/2021);
2) Process Description No. 29 "Elections of Academic Staff" (approved by Rector of Riga Stradins

University 22.11.2012. Order No.2-3 / 484 with amendments made by the Rector 03.06.2020. order no. 5-1 / 217/2020);
3)The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education (ESG).(2015) Brussels, Belgium.

All vacancies for academic and scientific staff are advertised in open competition, published on the RSU home page, the portal "Latvijas Vestnesis", and other jobs local or international portals and if needed, information can be put on social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn etc. It is mentioned, that RSU pays attention to issues of interaction of different generations of staff. (SAR, Annex 23, p. 8)

Since 2012, all RSU students have had access to psycho-emotional support. The service was introduced to help students to overcome adaptation problems when starting their studies, reduce the emotional manifestations of stress, stress-related health disorders, psychosomatic disorders or illnesses, overcoming relationship-building difficulties and crises. A human being is a single entity, and only an emotionally stable and balanced student rarely gets sick and achieves more. The need for the service has been appreciated by both local and international students. The student may choose to attend group or individual visits to the resident physician. The introduction of the service has helped to reduce the number of students who have dropped out of the study process and has helped to increase the efficiency of study work by reducing students' stress and adaptive disorders. (SAR, p. 60). During the on-site visit, experts did not have any reasons to doubt this.

The RSU has a Career Centre, that is an active member of the Latvian Career Development Support Association. The services of the Career Centre are available to all RSU students, prospective students, as well as employees. Students can post their CVs and get information about job vacancies on the RSU website.The RSU Career Centre provides literature and information materials on career topics that students can read on the spot or take home for reading. (SAR, p. 60)

The International Department (ID) provides informational support to international students. The mentor programme is maintained to help the new international students to adapt to the higher education institution. Even before the new students arrive in Latvia, they may contact previously trained mentors, and senior local and international RSU students. Before the beginning of each semester, the ID organises an informative exhibition, providing the opportunity for the new international students to obtain information about various RSU student organisations, amateur groups, sports clubs, health centre and clinics of psychosomatic medicine, etc. (SAR, p. 60).

According to the available information in SAR, RSU has developed a motivating and strategic system that motivates the involvement of teachers in research and career development. Support measures are provided such as a motivational remuneration system, a one-off remuneration according to the investment, financial support for publications, training and networking measures, formal lifelong learning measures, and support for learning English. A system has also been put in place to assess performance. Employee surveys are conducted regularly to assess employee satisfaction. (SAR, Annex 23, p. 9)

According to SAR (p. 59) scientific work is a mandatory part of the work of the academic staff and the proportion for scientific and research activities is depending on the type of academic position, but as shown in Annexe 6.1. the volume of scientific work especially from a social work-related perspective is relatively small. The only way to increase the number of publications is to reduce the workload of academic staff who have too many study courses.

1.3.6. According to SAR (p. 55) Qualified teaching staff is involved in the study direction, the support function is performed by administrative and economic staff. The attraction of the academic staff is ensured in accordance with the internal regulatory enactments.

In order to promote the career development of the academic staff, which significantly influences the research and study provision process, Centre for Educational Growth has been established at RSU. The main tasks of the center are aimed at improving the quality of studies and the competence of lecturers by offering various courses and trainings related to the improvement of digital skills, research, the content of remote work training is changing and new updated trainings are offered every year.

According to the available information in SAR, the RSU has developed a motivating and strategic system that motivates the involvement of teachers in research and career development. Support measures are provided such as: a motivational remuneration system, a one-off remuneration according to the investment, financial support for publications, training and networking measures, formal lifelong learning measures, support for learning English. A system has also been put in place to assess performance. Employee surveys are conducted on a regular basis to assess employee satisfaction. (SAR, Annex 23, p. 9)

1.3.7. According to SAR (Annex 6.1) 65 lecturers of teaching staff are involved in the study field of "Social Welfare". 33 of them are in an academic position of studies and 2 are guest lecturers. 21 lecturers are elected. Data demonstrates, that 46 of them are involved in professional bachelor study program, 9 in social academic master's study program and 34 in professional master's study program. 17 lecturers are involved in both bachelor's and master's study programs, but 4 give lectures in all 3 programs.

A system has been established in which lecturers plan their workload, the workload is reviewed by regulatory enactments. As mentioned in the SAR, RSU pays attention to the balanced workload of lecturers to reduce and prevent the risk of burnout of teachers (SAR, p. 58). However, as SAR shows, all three program directors at the same time are lecturers in all three studies programs, as well as all three are involved in local and foreign scientific researches, publish articles, participate in local and international conferences etc. (Annexes 6.1 and 6.4). In addition, the head of the bachelor's program has been elected and work for Executive Committee of the European Association of Social Work Schools as well. SAR does not show data about the workload of teachers' work according to Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 445.

According to the SAR (p. 59) scientific work is a mandatory part of the work of the academic staff and the proportion for scientific and research activities is depending on the type of academic position, but as the Annex 6.1 shows, volume of scientific work especially to social work-related perspective is relatively small. The only way to increase the number of publications is to reduce workload of academic staff who have too many study courses.

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

Profitability in study programmes is a high priority for RSU. The infrastructure of RSU is very well developed and modern, student-centred. Auditoriums are well-equipped with technical and IT solutions - with projectors, interactive whiteboards, free access to internet and Wi-Fi, sound system etc. As an information and communication technology tool in the study process RSU uses the Moodle system, which is regularly updated. It includes a lot of different possibilities in the study process for teachers, students and administration as well. The needs of the teaching staff for professional and

didactic improvement are identified in a target-oriented manner. the teaching staff has an opportunity to learn different seminars and courses in continuous learning and get consultations on teaching and learning methods. The RSU has identified the support necessary for the students and established a well-functioning support system, based on the needs of the students.

Strengths:
1. Extensive material and technical base, infrastructure is modern, developed and student-centred.
2. Infrastructure is design and is suitable for persons with movement, visual, hearing or mental disabilities. Special guidelines have been developed.
3. E-studies environments are at very high level.
4. The most popular databases and the latest literature published both in Latvia and abroad in the last ten years are available in the library's collections.
5. RSU has established a structured system of professional development and job evaluation of teaching staff.
6. Great access to psycho-emotional support service, used by both local and international students.

Weaknesses:
1. The workload of the leading study programme directors is unbalanced and foresee little proportion of workload for research and scientific activities.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1. The RSU supports scientific research development aiming to ensure high-quality research staff, foster innovations and increases RSU's global competitiveness.

According to the SAR, the RSU places great emphasis on developing social sciences research at RSU giving the priority to such research to strengthen the role of social sciences in RSU. The social sciences and humanities sector had been identified as a "Growth sector" in priorities set out in the 2015-2020 RSU Development strategy (SAR, Table 8, p. 62) and has "a great untapped potential" for contributing to addressing societal changes. Social care research development is named one of the basic research fields (Article 2.2 of RSU Constitution).

The RSU Social Sciences platform emphasized the importance of promoting such research areas as medical law and international and EU law (SAR, p. 64). However, the question arises about the research directions as the priorities of the study field of Social Welfare which would contribute to the development of the field and be in line with the RSU research strategy as well as meet recommendations formulated by the Ministry of Welfare (SAR, p. 111).

The research areas identified at the university, such as maternal and child health, rehabilitation and ageing population, and public health, closely relate to the goals of the field of Social Welfare and therefore provide an excellent opportunity for the development of interdisciplinary research projects in collaboration with other research areas.

The research carried out by the teachers in the Social Welfare field covers the areas of family health, social work with the family, assistance to children and youth, and family policy. Research on the manifestation of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on society has emerged as one of the predominant topics in the work of researchers in recent years. (SAR, Annex 6.4). A greater focus on research in social work direction would strengthen this direction of study field.

1.4.2. In the study plans and processes of all programs, place great attention on research - both theoretical preparation and development of practical skills. The study subjects which include research are arranged logically and consistently in all three study programmes, starting with theoretical knowledge of research methods, developing semester papers, and ending with the final thesis (SAR, Annex 19).

The research study process and study methods applied in all study programmes encourage Social Welfare field students to get to know the complexity of the social work field, develop students critical thinking and improve their discussion skills.

1.4.3. Teaching staff and students in the study field of Social Welfare participated and currently are involved in several ongoing international research projects. Regular international conferences organized by Department became a part of the RSU International Research Week programme and involves partners from different countries.

1.4.4. According to the SAR, the RSU's strategy for the development of social sciences research aims to analyse and make changes needed for improving and strengthening research in this area. The results for the 2013-2018 period showed the achievements encompassing employment of doctoral students, support for post-doctoral research, competitive salaries for visiting lecturers, financial support, and student involvement. To attract and motivate researchers, the RSU organized training and provided support and advice on methodology and project management. As pointed out in SAR (p. 69), RSU increased remuneration and presented a bonus system for the staff involved in research.

However, as the SAR points out, the researcher affiliation rate is still insufficient. During the expert meeting with study field teachers, they noticed that it is very difficult to combine both academic (pedagogical) and scientific work. According to the SAR (p. 63), research activities of academic staff are partly compensated within their basic salary where a particular amount of work is prescribed as research work. The question arises what are the strengths and weaknesses of the existing system to make changes for ensuring staff involvement in research and supporting teachers to combine both academic and scientific areas.

1.4.5. There are several ways mentioned in SAR, showing the RSU policy of involving students in scientific research at RSU. Students have quite wide opportunities to take part in student research groups, participate in the Students Union (SU) Academy of Researches, and can be supported financially. RSU's annual International Student Conference is expanding in both its duration and the number of students. The RSU applies creative ways to improve the quality of ISC, for example, each year, a new team of organizers takes responsibility for managing the conference (SAR, p. 70). According to the SAR, master students together with their teachers participate in the joint research project and present their research results at the International Conference (SAR, pp. 70-71), and publish the results of their research in the edition of the department.

However, the SAR points out that there is not enough motivation among the students in the field of social sciences to get involved in research activities. Despite the measures applied to motivate students (adding grades to the final paper or granting tuition fee discounts) (pp. 70-71), it seems that only a small number of students use the opportunities mentioned in SAR. The question arises what obstacles see the students themselves and what would encourage their greater activity.

1.4.6. As mentioned in SAR (pp. 68-69), RSU successfully develops and implements various innovative solutions that are successfully attracted by state and EU projects and private charitable

foundations. Those who gain from innovations are both students and lecturers as well and an overall winner is all system. As one of the innovative tools that promote the quality of study courses, RSU mentions a new type of mapping, developed by the RSU Centre for Educational Growth, which was introduced in 2017-2018 and the system is improved and perfected over years.

Scholarships are available to new lecturers individually or in cooperation with a mentor, the aim of which is to support new colleagues in the study course in the modernization of the content of the study program and the integration of international experience.

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

The RSU pays great attention to scientific research, and the organization of research is well developed. To implement extensive academic and professional education social care is identified as one of the several basic research fields. The research topics, covered by teachers and students from the Social Welfare field correspond to the specific nature of the study field and meet the directions of the Ministry of Welfare and could be strengthened more focusing specifically on social work issues. RSU developed the mechanisms of teachers' and students' involvement into research, however, this involvement could be more active and the RSU is discussing the ways of improvement.

Strengths
1. The RSU has a highly developed organization of research as a Research Development Strategy, mechanisms promoting research.
2. The challenges related to teachers' and students' involvement in research are analysed and reviewed by RSU and Social Welfare study field, and new ways of solving emerging problems are being sought.
3. The RSU is open to searching and applying innovative solutions in the study process as mapping, e-learning environment, and support of new teachers.

Weaknesses
1. The lack of specific focus of the field of Social Welfare on social work research.
2. Existing system (in combining academic and scientific work) prevents teachers' involvement and participation in research projects.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

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

   Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

   There is a lack of specific focus of the field of Social Welfare on social work research.
   RSU and study field management have developed necessary mechanisms and tools for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research. Scientific research and the outcomes are integrated into the study process in the three study programmes.

   DWSW promotes, conducts, and plans national and international research focused on the field of social work with an aim to expand the research and to engage more researchers. It is likely that the efforts made by RSU and specifically DWSW to enable faculty and students to engage in and disseminate research will strengthen the field of social work.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1. Cooperation on the national level can be divided into multiple parts: other higher education institutions and cooperation with the non-governmental, private and public sector. When it comes to cooperation with other higher education institutions in Latvia there is room for improvement. Students should be encouraged to use the opportunity to attend some study courses in other higher education institutions as there were no examples shown of this happening. RSU should also explore the opportunity to encourage student-student cooperation between different higher education institutions during the study process and research. (The University of Latvia might be a good candidate).

Looking at cooperation with the different non-governmental organizations, employers and the public sector this usually takes the form of, but is not limited to, ensuring placements for students in the social welfare sector. These organizations are selected with the key goal in mind: how can cooperation partners promote the achievement of the outcomes of the study programmes. RSU also promotes the quality of these placement locations and the staff of partners, for example, by organizing training for the placement supervisors in 2020. (SAR, p. 76)

From the discussions during the on-site visit with management, students and employers it was clear that the main goal of these placements is not only to connect the theoretical knowledge gained during the lectures with practical skills, but also as an extension of the study process itself, where students often find themselves outside the typical situations and have to find ways to adapt. One of the interviewed people remarked that students also help by relaying the newest developments in the field of social welfare thus improving their work.
When it comes to the selection of these partnerships multiple things are taken into consideration, such as geographical location, their specialization with special emphasis placed on the diversity of clients and opportunities the specific organization can provide for the students there. (Discussions during the on-site visit, SAR, p. 76)

1.5.2. The general direction of cooperation and internationalization within the study field looks reasonable and well-directed. However, despite a track record of individual partnerships and projects, such as cooperation with the European Association of Schools of Social Work (SAR, p. 47) and various international scientific research projects (comprehensive list on SAR, p. 66), including a flow of incoming students from the EU and outside EU, the study fields demonstrate an insufficient level of embedding internationalization and cooperation.

RSU International Department has established a network of partner higher education institutions in Europe. RSU, representatives of RSU International Department regularly attend annual events of professional international associations with a purpose to ensure exchanges, including visiting teaching staff. For example, RSU participates in networking exhibitions organized by the European Association of Erasmus Coordinators and European Association for International Education. RSU supports Erasmus visiting teaching visits both before the visiting teaching staff arrives in Riga and during the period of their visiting teaching (for example, administers documentation of the visiting teaching, draws up the plan of activities, assists in the process of the visit, etc.). (SAR, p. 76) The study field of Social Welfare depends on an already existing network of international partners for its mobility options for both staff and students, cooperation in research etc.

1.5.3. A common system for the provision of traineeships and the organization thereof is well developed and defined. This was shown both throughout the discussions with students and academic staff. Students are assisted every step of the way. All relevant documents and assistance

tools are accessible to students and are well defined. One thing to note however is that RSU should lean into their reputation as a medical university and seek to promote student placements in medicine-related contexts and not just typical social welfare placements.

When it comes to internationalization a system has been developed to attract both incoming and outgoing mobility, for example RSU participates in networking exhibitions organized by the European Association of Erasmus Coordinators and European Association for International Education, organizes events where incoming students can have their questions answered about the study life in Latvia. (SAR, p. 76 & On-site visit)

The experts' team was surprised by the low participation of social work students in academic exchange programmes. Starting from 2013 to 2021 there have been 44 cases of student mobility out of which only 12 have been outgoing mobility. (Annex 8.2) When discussing this issue with students one of the main issues that came up was the fact that mobility takes a lot of time away from work and other commitments. One of the things to address overtime is reducing any obstacles from the HEI side as well as promoting short-term mobility. The use of international study and research materials however is widespread and encouraged. (On-site visit)

When it comes to academic staff mobility RSUs' staff is very motivated to participate in different opportunities which is reflected in the fact that 41 out of 65 academic staff members from the year 2014. till 2021. have attended at least one mobility event, most of them more than one. In the same time frame, there have been 15 different lecturers who have chosen RSU as their destination through Erasmus staff teaching mobility, 7 of them more than once, which shows that there is great potential for this study field to increase their internationalization efforts. (Annex 6.3. & On-site visit).

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

The general direction of cooperation and internationalisation within the study field looks reasonable and well-directed.
The main goal of these placements is to connect the theoretical knowledge gained during the lectures with practical skills as well as to extend of the study process itself, where students often find themselves outside the typical situations and have to find ways to adapt. However, the the low participation of social work students in academic exchange programmes might be an obstacle for the growth of the study field. While, RSUs' staff is very motivated to participate in different mobility opportunities.

Strengths:
1. The groundwork to ensure high mobility of staff and students has been created.
2. A common system for the provision of traineeships and the organisation is well developed.

Weaknesses
1. The mobility of students is on the low side and need to be fostered.
2. Cooperation with other higher education institutions in Latvia is average.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   During the on-site visit both HEI and study field management showed that even though

cooperation in Latvia is stronger than cooperation abroad, both directions are aimed at achieving the goals of the study field and to improve the experience during studies and coincides with the goal of creating knowledgeable, thoughtful and well respected experts in their field.

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

Analysis

1.6.1. The previous accreditation of the study field "Social Work" was performed back in 2012-2013. As a result of it, the study field was accredited for 6 years considering the regulatory framework being in force.

In the academic year 2011/2012, the professional bachelor's and professional master's study programme in social work was evaluated within the ESF-funded project "Evaluation of higher education study programmes and proposals for improving their quality". As the result, experts recognised that the RSU study programmes in social work were assigned to category A (SAR, Annex 11). While, joint professional Master's SP was licensed at Riga Stradiņš University (RSU) in 2014 (Decision No 32 of Study Programme Licensing Commission of 27 August 2014).

However, the experts also expressed several recommendations to be considered:
1. Reinforcement of learning practical knowledge, skills and abilities in the study process;
2. To formulate differences for Bachelor's and Master's research;
3. Integration of medical study courses in study programmes and their coordination with the specifics of the social worker's profession;
4. Development of international dimension.

In the reaction to recommendations expressed, RSU has prepared the plan and taken all necessary steps for improvements in the study programmes. By the end of 2021, to reinforce the learning of practical skills, RSU has introduced the study course "Training of Professional Skills". In addition to this, the study placement is ensured for all students because of the network of stakeholders established.

Regarding the differences between Bachelor's and Master's thesis and supporting research, RSU has designed the internal regulations with all necessary clarifications.

During the previous visit, it was advised to integrate medical study courses into study programmes based on the specific needs of the social worker's profession. According to the information received during the on-site visit and SAR, the issue is on the agenda, and there are medical courses offered for the students. However, the amount of the medical courses and their integration level into the social work programmes is an open question.

Development and strengthening of the international dimension are on the way. Along with internationalisation efforts performed (like the ERASMUS+ programme, and international projects), RSU is a participant in the ERASMUS Mundus project 619857-EPP-1- 2020-1-LT-EPPKA1-JMD-MOB aimed to deliver the European Joint Master in Social Work with Children and Youth. Even though RSU is at the very first stage of the project, this is strong evidence of international efforts.

During the reporting period there were two additional procedures identified.
Changes to the Professional Master's StP were introduced by the change of the procedure in 2015.

No recommendations were highlighted, thus no particular implementation plan is attached to the SAR.

The licensing procedure for the joint academic master's study programme "Social Work with Children and Youth" were performed in 2021. A plan for the implementation of the recommendations provided by licensing experts has been drawn up and is under implementation. The short term recommendation was related to the sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued, as well as to improve the sample of study agreement. This has been performed. The long-term recommendations were related to fostering the teaching staff to obtain the PhD. This is partially implemented. The current head of the study programme is on the way to defend the PhD.
There was also a recommendation regarding a nudge of RSU to initiate amendments to the Cabinet Regulation No. 240 to ensure that social welfare is not a part of medicine, but the separate field of professional activity and education. Considering the procedure of the amendment to the national bylaws, this recommendation is under implementation and it does not depends from the RSU.

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

All in all, the RSU has been serious-minded regarding the recommendation expressed in the previous expert assessment. Several actions involving the implementation of the recommendation were performed. The recommendations are either fully implemented or are under implementation considering the context and changing external conditions. No serious risks have been identified regarding the implementation of the previous recommendations.

Strengths:
1. The implementation of the European Joint Master in Social Work with Children and Youth.

Weaknesses:
None

Assessment of the requirement [4]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

RSU has fully implemented the recommendations identified during the previous assessments (as accreditation as well as licencing and implementation of substantial changes).

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

To ensure a direct link between the SWOT analysis and the development strategy the management approves
To encourage student-student cooperation across higher education institutions during the study process as well as during research.

Long-term recommendations

Until the next accreditation procedure is launched, to strengthen the research and to ensure feed of the research results into the study of courses especially in the social work perspective.
To provide short-term mobility options for students with the aim of increasing student mobility.
To reduce workload of academic staff who have too many study courses by lecturers working in the social field and with social work education.

II - "Social Work" ASSESSMENT

II - "Social Work" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The goal of the professional bachelor's study programme "Social Work" is to prepare qualified social workers with knowledge, skills, professional competence, values and attitudes according to the needs of modern society. The objectives of the professional study programme have been updated as the professional standard for 'a social worker' has been updated in 2020.Thus, the study programme fully corresponds to the study field.

2.1.2. The title of the professional bachelor's study programme is "Social Work". The degree to be acquired, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are generally coherent and relevant to the topic.

The professional bachelor study programme "Social Work" is implemented in Latvian as full-time studies in 4-year period and part-time studies in 4 years and 6 month period. The students are awarded with a Professional Bachelor's degree in Social Work. Gradutes also obtain the qualification "social worker".

2.1.3. Before the accreditation, the objectives of study programme have been clarified according to the updated professional standard for a social worker in 2020. As the result, the clarified aim is more precise and is well-worded.

2.1.4. The content of BA studies is coherent with the subsequent MA programme if students chose to pursue further their educational path after graduation from the BA programme. The programme is designed mainly for local students and the local labour market.

Data demonstrates a rather stable number of active students over the last six years with an average number of students around 15-16 for the whole programme with an exemption for 2019/2020 when 22 students were enrolled. In addition, the number of students enrolled for the part-time studies also has been rather stable, with a positive exception in 2016/2017 – with 32 enrolled students.

However, this programme also faces student dropouts during and after the first year of studies due to various reasons. Meanwhile, data demonstrate (SAR, Annex 16) that full-time studies are mainly financed by the state budget with approximately one-third of students with a privately funded fee. On average, there are around 30-32 state-financed budget places available. The part-time study programme is fully financed from the student fees.

2.1.5. Graduates of the programme are fully prepared for the labour market as was found out during

the site visit. In addition, Latvia is experiencing a shortage of social workers thus the study programme is fully justified from the perspective of the labour market.

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

The professional bachelor's study programme "Social work" is designed mainly for local students. The students choose the study programme because of the accessibility of the studies where the state budget finance plays an important role. Meanwhile, the tendency of students continues their study path – in the professional master programme is not as visible as it might be even though both programmes ensure synergy of content.

Strengths:
1. The professional bachelor's study programme is secure as long as there is a national demand, and the graduates are capable to find their place in the labour market directly related content of the programme.
2. There is a synergy in the content between the professional bachelor's programme and the professional master's programme "Social work".

Weaknesses:
1. The number of drop-outs during and after the first study year is an area of concern.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The Mapping system presented in SAR shows the study programme results in correspondence with the national and European Qualifications Framework (SAR, Annex 18.1, Table1), professional standards (SAR, Annex 18.2), and study programme courses' contribution to achieving the outcomes of the study programme (SAR, Annex 18.1, Table 2). Objectives of the study programme have been clarified according to the updated profession standard of social worker. The Professional Bachelor's study programme "Social Work" has been developed in accordance with the requirements of the profession standard of the social worker, the regulation binding on social work as a profession and the regulation and guidelines updating higher education standards.

The volume, duration and structure of the StP programme correspond with the requirements of Cabinet Regulations No. 512 "Regulations on the National Standard for the Second Level Professional Higher Education". Learning outcomes of the study programme ensure that the fifth-level professional qualification is obtained. Knowledge, skills and competence of the StP are in accordance with the knowledge, skills and competence Bachelor's StP corresponds to level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework of the European Qualifications Framework specified in the Latvian Education classification (Annex 17.1).
The Professional Bachelor's study programme "Social Work" has been developed in accordance with the requirements of the profession standard of the social worker, the regulation binding on social work as a profession and the regulation and guidelines updating higher education standards (Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadomes 2020. gada 14. oktobra sēdē, protokols Nr. 7)

The study field of Social Welfare has an excellent opportunity to integrate medical courses into the program. However, the medical content of some of these courses (or topics in these courses) raises questions about their importance and applicability in social work (SAR, Annex 19). Meanwhile, the scope of such courses important for social work as professional ethics, teamwork, and

communication could be enlarged. Topics of the final thesis (SAR, Annex 22) and choices for internship places (meeting with students) don't reveal students' preferences for health care areas.

During the meeting with the students, students mentioned that the language barrier is one of the barriers to participating in the exchange programmes. Perhaps a professional foreign language course would be one step in encouraging students to study abroad.

As it was discovered in Annex 8.2., there were no students for outgoing mobility in the professional bachelor's study programme since 2016/2017. The Annex 8.2. reflects there was just 1 (one) student in 2016/2017. However, there was a rather stable outgoing exchange detected in 2013/2014 and 2014/2015. It was identified during interviews that students are not keen to apply for outgoing mobility due to two main reasons – their English language skills and considering whether studies elsewhere will be provided added value for their professional path in the organisation of Latvian social welfare.

The study program plan (SAR, Annex 19) includes 68 study courses, with 9-10 courses studied in some semesters (1-3). Given that the assessment of each course involves several forms of assessment (e.g. group work, individual work, test) (SAR, Annex 21), it may be that students are overburdened and this could be one of the reasons for the "fatigue syndrome observed" reported in SAR (p. 24). Larger building blocks on some topics (e.g. professional communication) could be one of the possible solutions.

The block of lecturers teaching speciality subjects consists of practising social workers, lecturers conducting scientific research in the field of social work, as well as lecturers belonging to international professional associations. This diversity of lecturers' experiences makes it possible to ensure that the subjects' content meets the needs of the labour market, and science in a national as well as global context. As the SAR points out, the content of study courses is reviewed and updated annually (pp. 137-138). Whereas some topics are repeated in different courses (e.g. active listening, motivational interviews, etc.) it is important to continue lecture collaboration in re-reviewing study courses.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. The wide range of study methods used in the program is focused on the aims of the study course and study programme. Interactive learning methods (group work, role-playing, interviewing, simulation, discussions, and visits to institutions) which play an important role for the acquisition of professional skills in social work, are presented in SAR as applied in the specialization modules.

DWDW integrated various learning and communication tools during the pandemic period. Representatives of DWDW are involved in the project aimed to improve lecturers' skills in preparing digital simulation scenarios (SAR, p. 141).

According to the SAR, student-centred principles are demonstrated in various ways. Students actively participate in Student Union activities and Quality Council meetings. DWSW demonstrated flexibility in finding solutions and opportunities for students to combine studies with family and work responsibilities, especially during the pandemia period. Students are offered various opportunities to engage in activities outside the university, to participate in international projects and exchange programs, although, as the students themselves identified during the meeting with the Expert Group, the latter opportunities are rarely used.

2.2.4. According to the SAR, the RSU pays great attention to linking theory with practice, participating in various discussions with employers, other universities, and graduates. The RSU has provided an internship supervisor during the study process, who ensures the organization of the internship. The documents regulating the organization of the internship have been created, such as the Regulations of the Internship, the internship manuals, the internship diary - a report. Aims and objectives are clearly defined and understandable (SAR, Annex 9).

The SAR shiows that information confirmed by the staff responsible for the internship in the meeting, RSU has developed a wide enough field of internships. A tripartite cooperation agreement has been concluded between RSU, the Ministry of Welfare and the Latvian Association of Local Governments. There is also a cooperation agreement with the Welfare Department of the Riga City Council, which subordinates various municipal institutions - Riga Social Service, Riga Municipality and Children's Youth Centre, Riga Shelter, social care and rehabilitation institutions, Riga's hospitals, etc., where students can have various internships and get acquainted with social work institutions. and target groups, as well as various elements related to social work. (Annex 9.2). The agreement allows 3rd-year students to work in the Riga Social Service during the time of practice under the supervision of a practice supervisor, receiving a salary for that. As practice supervisors and employers confirm, students often start working full time for Social services, which is a great support to employers in ensuring an adequate number of social workers in the city. Another mutually beneficial aspect mentioned by employers' internship supervisors is the exchange of information, where internship supervisors receive information on current events in the field of study and the latest scientific research at the university, and students gain experience in the field. Before the internship, RSU provided training for internship supervisors according to an agreement. During the meeting, the responsible person of RSU for internship told that internship training has been organized in the regions as well. In general, this model indicates a very successful link between theory and practice, from which gains the student, the employer and the RSU as well.

During the meeting, the question arose that full-time bachelor students have better opportunities for internships than part-time students. This is probably because part-time students also work and possibly live outside Riga and thus want to do an internship closer to their place of residence or work. Students can choose an internship place according to their professional interests. The head of the internship also confirmed during the meeting that RSU helps to provide internships for all students, however, in the conversation with the students it became clear that there are still some difficulties related to finding internships. However, the question arises whether this is related to the students themselves or the need for larger internship places, involving and concluding cooperation agreements with, for example, different NGOs that provide social services, especially in Riga, where social services are mostly delegated to social service providers.

Although the SAR's Annex 9.2. lists various institutions with which individual tripartite cooperation agreements are concluded (student, institution, RSU), however, it depends on the willingness of the heads of the institution or other interns to volunteer to provide internships, and they do not have the opportunity to receive internship training provided by RSU. It is not clear do they get any feedback or communication with RSU.

Although the RSU Social Work study program is related to the medical field, students choose a few internships in the field of health in a hospital or other medical institution.

As a positive aspect, it can be mentioned that during the meeting the employers confirmed that RSU students who come to practice have higher competencies - both knowledge and skills compared to other universities.

The development of students' research skills includes both theoretical preparation and training of practical skills. Appropriate study courses are arranged logically and consistently throughout the study programme starting with theoretical knowledge of research methods, developing semester papers, and ending with the final thesis (SAR, Annex 19).

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6.The SAR presents main six blocks encompassing the topics chosen by StP students. The topics are relevant to the proposals and recommendations of the Ministry of Welfare and reflect the development of the social work sector. The topics cover provision and development of innovative services, and administrative issues of national reform. Social work with people having mental disabilities and social work in the pandemia period revealed the ongoing and particularly important issues in society and industry (SAR, pp. 149-150).

According to the SAR, the students of the BA StP "Social Work" can choose the topics presented by DWSW lecturers. Some discussions in DWSW to enable students to choose their research topics as acquaintance with institutions and internships organized from the first year of study may arouse students' interest in some specific topic from the field of social work.

Quite high evaluation of Bachelor's thesis (between 7 and 10) shows, according to the SAR, successful StP student's acquisition of research skills (p. 149). The topics of the final thesis of the study programme students reflect the topicality of the processes taking place in society and are relevant to the field of social work activities.

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

The developed Mapping system reveals the interrelations and relevance of the study courses with the study results and is a good tool for program developers and implementers to make changes to the program to improve it. The organization of the internship is regulated by the internship regulations and the practice diary as an evaluation tool. Cooperation with a sufficiently wide network of municipal social institutions, working with different target groups, has been established to provide internships.

Strengths:
1. The bachelor's study plan is based on existing national and international documents.
2. There are clearly defined aims and objectives of internships.

Weaknesses:
1. The content (some medical courses) and structure (number of courses) of the program raises questions about its relevance and impact on students.
2. Many service providers provide various social services with different specializations and specifics, especially in the city of Riga, which could be considered an unused resource.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. As mentioned in SAR and as the experts confirmed during the visit to RSU, the common RSU infrastructure is used to provide the study program - the premises such as information centre, library, corridors, café etc. rooms are modern, light, warm, comfortable and centred on students. Lot of very well-equipped auditoriums with technical and IT solutions, such as free access to internet, projectors, interactive whiteboards etc. Possibilities for students to download MS Office to personal computers, possibility to use the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. Premises are suitable for persons with movement, visual, hearing or mental disabilities. Special guidelines have been developed (SAR, p. 46).

E-studies environment provides all the necessary information about study process such as course descriptions, information about tests, regular assignments, required literature etc. The developed e-environment ensured continuous learning even during the pandemic. Lecturers had the opportunity to be regularly trained, the university provided both students and lecturers with the necessary equipment to manage the study process and ensure the acquisition of study content.

Library provides students and teachers with access to different local and international electronic resources as well as the latest books and journals in different languages (SAR, p. 151). During the visit in library the teaching staff stated that they have an opportunity to apply for the literature and there are planned finances for this reason in amount of 2000 euros every year. If necessary, students and lecturers had the opportunity to visit the library at Dzirciema Street 16 24 hours a day.

2.3.2 not applicable

2.3.3. Social work in the professional bachelor's program in RSU is possible to study in full-time and part-time study programs. There was a total of 11 budget places in the full-time study program in the 2020/2021 academic year (8 places financed from the state budget and 3 places financed by RSU). Other students' study at the expense of private or legal persons. There are regulations that determine the procedure by which a student can be transferred to a state budget place, as well as a regulation that determines the possible discounts for tuition fees. Part-time on-site programs is funded by private ore legal person.

Tuition fees have been agreed at the RSU Rectorate and last updated in 2021. Tuition fees are determined taking into account the costs related to the academic staff, the resources of the department and form of studies (SER, 153, 154). The tuition fee for full time study program with an excellence discount is 1550.00 EUR per year, but for the part-time on – site program with an excellence discount is 2200 EUR per year.

As shown by SAR, and during the meeting with the head of the study field, the director of the study program and the employees, it was clarified that the Department of Social Work maintains regular communication with employers and local governments, especially with the Riga City Council, which is considered as good practice. Already, students working in the Riga Social Service can apply for financial support from the municipality. There is also communication with the Riga City Council, which in the future could provide a certain number of study places, which in turn would ensure the attraction of employees and address the shortage of social workers in the municipality. During the conversation with director of study field, she confirmed that information has been received about 10 state-funded budget places, however, their distribution (how many bachelors and how many master's) is not known at the moment.

It is also to be welcomed that RSU is trying to find solutions for profitability and financial stability, such as attracting state and municipal funding and enrolling students every 2 years (SAR, p. 154). If we look at the statistics that show the number of students by funding source, we can see that state-funded places are a guarantee of a stable attraction for students. (SAR, Annex16, p. 6).

All in all, the study provisions scientific support, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision fully comply with the implementation of the programme. This means that there is not only a good physical environment (modern, accessible infrastructure, free wi-fi, study desks, silent boxes etc.), but also access to study materials, e-resources. In addition recently all of the necessary information about the study life has been compiled in one single location online where you can find essentially anything you might need (reglementations, tutorials for using other systems, FAQ, etc.).

The library has all necessary resources (books, journals, access to databases, etc.).

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

RSU provides a modern study environment for students and academic staff that creates all the prerequisites for the successful achievement of the learning outcomes. Premises are suitable for persons with special needs. There are state budget places and tuition fees are reasonable. There are different opportunities to fee discount and get into budget places. There is regular communication between Ministry of Welfare and Riga City Council. RSU pays great attention to profitability and financial sustainability.

Strengths:
1. The resources and provision of the study programme are of an extremely high standard.
2. Premises are suitable for persons with movement, visual, hearing or mental disabilities.
3. Procedures have been developed that determine the tuition fee discount policy and the possibility to transfer to state-funded budget places.
4. Cooperation with local governments, especially Riga Municipality, is considered to be a good practice.
5. There is a vision for profitability and financial stability of the study programme.

Weaknesses:
1. None

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The programme have a good provision regarding resources as library as well as essential technical provision. From the perspectives of resources, the programme is equipped in such amount as it ensures achievement of the learning outcomes. The students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure and to improve the quality of teaching and learning process.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. There is evidence that the qualification of the teaching staff involved in the professional bachelor study program complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments and the conditions for the implementation of the study program.

As SAR shows, the study program employs a sufficient number of lecturers with the appropriate level of qualification and includes guest lectures of the appropriate qualification who participate in the implementation of the study program, for example, from 46 lecturer's majority or 28 of them have master's degree, but 16 have a doctoral degree (SAR, Annex 6.1.). 15 are in academic positions at RSU and among them are 5 professors and 2 associate professors.

2.4.2. There is a small proportion of teachers currently working in social work or with a basic social work education, which may be the reason why all three programme directors give lectures in all three study programs, as well as all three participate in scientific research. The Head of the Department of Welfare and Social Work has a particularly heavy workload. During the meeting with the director of the program, it was found out that, the director of the professional bachelor's program "Social Work" currently studying for a doctoral study, which will have a positive effect on the future.

The qualifications of the teaching staff member align with the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. Both scientific, teaching and professional skills of the teaching staff cover all areas needed to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. This is especially important in study courses directly related to social work, which allows including issues actual in practice, and, as shown SAR (p.156), RSU seems tray to pay special attention to.

According to SAR (pp. 53-54), the teaching staff has an opportunity to learn different seminars and courses in continuous learning and get consultations on teaching and learning methods.

Although most of the teachers' biographies show that their English language skills are at least level B, it was observed at the meeting that some of them had difficulty speaking English, which can raise various questions about the use of the latest literature, in participation in international research or sharing experience with foreign colleagues.

However, during interviews, we discovered that students, as well as graduates, are struggling to use English in conversation. Thus, students might be able to use English for reading texts, however, a fully international environment is when the students are also able to speak and express themselves fluently.

According to the SAR, the teaching staff is stable, and cooperation with different teachers has been organized for many years. Although there have been changes in staff related to the interaction between succession and generations, this has not affected the quality of the study program and is in line with regulatory requirements. RSU also employs lecturers who are employers in the social work area or graduates, who are social work practitioners in various social institutions now, which was noted as very positive by the students during the meeting at RSU. There is just one guest lecture involved in the study program. Although SAR mentions that lecturers have both academic and practical work experience in the social field, looking at the CVs in the appendix, it can be concluded that the practical work experience in different social work levels is relatively small.

2.4.3. No applicable.

2.4.4. There is evidence that teachers publish their work in domestic and foreign journals, as well as in domestic and international publicly available databases. The research carried out by the teachers in the Social Welfare field covers the areas of family health, social work with the family, assistance to children and youth, and family policy. Research on the manifestation of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on society has emerged as one of the predominant topics in the work of researchers in recent years. (SAR, Annex 6.4). A greater focus on research in social work direction would strengthen this direction of study field.

With funding from RSU, projects or other sources, teaching staff participated and currently are involved in several ongoing international research projects. Regular international conferences organized by Department became a part of the RSU International Research Week programme and involves partners from different countries.

As SAR shows, teachers involved in compulsory subjects directly related to social work publish their articles and research mainly in collections of articles published by RSU, for example, Social Work: Education, Research, Practice, or conference proceedings books of conferences organized by RSU (Annex 6.4.).

2.4.5. A mechanism for the cooperation of the teaching staff in the implementation of the study programme has been established, it ensures the achievement of the aims of the study programme and the interconnection of study courses within the study programme.

RSU has established different mechanisms for the cooperation of teaching and support staff in the implementation of the study program. According to SAR, at the beginning of the academic year, there is a discussion in the lecturers' environment about any changes or difficulties observed in social work practice, so as not to lose the link between theory and practice. According to that, there have been implemented new study courses.

There are internal procedures that regulate the management of the study programme, cooperation planning and quality control options. The teaching staff has regular meetings to assure the activities in the program are carried on according to the plan. According to SAR, regular observation is also performed, however, the list shows that these are decreasing every year.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the professional bachelor study program complies with the requirements of laws and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. Both scientific, teaching and professional skills of the teaching staff cover all areas needed to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. However, a greater focus on research in social work direction would strengthen the study programme and the study field as well.

Strengths:

1. In the implementation of the program, there is a high number of lecturers with doctoral and master's degrees involved.
2. The RSU has established mechanisms that ensure the work of the teaching and support staff.
3. Collaboration between theory and practice results in new training courses for the students.

Weaknesses:

1. Although the teaching staff is involved in different projects there are a small number of researches directly related to social work.
2. There are too few lecturers with social work education and who work in social work (present) involved in the delivery of the study programme.
3. There is an evident lack or non-use of English during the study process.
4. There are too small a number of guest lecturers for abroad.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The qualification of the academic staff members and visiting academic staff are appropriate the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the legal framework.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme fully complies with the requirements set out in the Professional Higher Education Standard. The study programme complies with a professional standard of 'a social worker' been approved by the Tripartite Cooperation Subcommittee on Vocational Education and Employment meeting of 14 October 2020, minutes No. 7.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The aim, objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme are coordinated and complies with the professional standard for a social worker. The "Professional Standard for a Social Worker" approved in the Republic of Latvia in 2010 was in force until 1 June 2017.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The course descriptions contain all necessary information related the study course. In particular, the course descriptions cover the requirements of the study course; the aims the study course and the planned learning outcomes; the content of the study; the study course time plan, mandatory and supplementary literature, other sources of information; the organisation and tasks for the independent work of students as well as the evaluation criteria of learning

outcomes.

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The diploma sample issued to graduates complies with the Cabinet Regulations No. 202.

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

   Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

   Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

   Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The attached CVs of the teaching staff confirm that state language proficiency is compliant with regulations No. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".

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

   Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The sample of the study agreement provided in the annex of the SAR includes all mandatory provisions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

An agreement with the University of Latvia is signed electronically back in May 11, 2021. According to the agreement, in case the implementation of the RSU professional bachelor's study programme "Social Work" is terminated, the students shall be admitted to the equal study programme of the University of Latvia.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is a guarantee (included in the annexe, dated November 16, 2021) stated that RSU guarantees compensation for damages caused to the student if, due to RSU conduct (act or omission), the study field "Social Work" is not accredited or the licenses of the study programmes belonging to the study direction are withdrawn, or the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The programme is well developed and fits all necessary the requirements stated in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education and other Latvian regulatory enactments like Law on Scientific Activity. Evidence regarding compliance is included above.

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

In general, the study programme is designed at a good level. As Latvia is experiencing a shortage of social workers thus the study programme is fully justified from the perspective of the labour market. The wide range of study methods used in the program is focused on the aims of the study course and study programme. The development of students' research skills includes both theoretical preparation and training of practical skills. Appropriate study courses are arranged logically and consistently throughout the study programme starting with theoretical knowledge of research methods, developing semester papers, and ending with the final thesis. RSU provides a modern study environment for students and academic staff that creates all the prerequisites for the successful achievement of the learning outcomes

Strengths:

1. The professional bachelor's study programme is secure as long as there is a national demand, and the graduates are capable to find their place in the labour market directly related content of the programme.
2. There is a synergy in the content between the professional bachelor's programme "Social Work" and the professional master's programme "Social Work".

Weaknesses:
1. As the professional bachelor's study programme is designed for the local students with a national focus, the internationalisation of studies and international mobility of students (in and out) is vague.
2. Although teaching staff is involved in different projects there are a small number of researches directly related to social work.

Evaluation of the study programme "Social Work"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Social Work"

Short-term recommendations

On annual bases to analyse in-depth factors of students drop-outs and to implements mechanisms for limiting drop-outs

Long-term recommendations

To strengthen the research and to ensure feed of the research results into the study of courses, especially in the social work perspective.
To increase the capacity of the teaching staff to strengthen research, especially in the social work perspective.
To strengthen English knowledge skills using opportunities offered by RSU internal resources or others.
To increase the number of teachers and guest lecturers with social work education (MP) and practical experience at different social work levels, will link theory with practice which is particularly important in professional social work. It will increase the capacity of study field development and research as well.
To improve the quality and volume of internships, and improve cooperative relations with RSU and a much wider range of placements, also providing training for internship supervisors.
To streamline the rights, duties and responsibilities of all parties involved in the internship, considering different specializations and specifics of service providers.
To restructure the content (some medical courses) and structure (number of courses) of the programme

II - "Social Work with Children and Youth" ASSESSMENT

II - "Social Work with Children and Youth" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The joint academic master's study programme "Social Work with Children and Youth" was licensed at RSU already back in 2021. Based on the agreement among four universities - RSU (Latvia), MRU (Lithuania), the Catholic University of Ružomberok (Slovakia) and the University Institute of Lisbon (Portugal) - the joint academic master`s study programme is going to be implemented under the combined efforts and it fully fits under the study direction 'Social Welfare'.Thus, the study programme fully corresponds to the study field.

2.1.2. The goal of the academic master's study programme "Social work with Children and Youth" is to prepare highly qualified masters of social work with management-level professional competence. The study programme is implemented in English as full-time studies in 2 years (80 CP) period. The graduates of the programme are awarded a European Joint Master in Social Work with Children and Youth. The diploma will be issued by Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (Portugal); it will be signed by the rectors of all 4 higher education institutions. According to the student rotation plan, the RSU is responsible for the 2nd semester of the programme assuming students will learn each semester in other Consortium partner university.

2.1.3. In RSU, in order to implement the joint academic master programme it is required to change the type of programme from professional master's SP to academic Master's study programme, providing for the degree to be awarded according to the definition established in the legislation of the Republic of Latvia: Master of Health Sciences degree in Social Work.

2.1.4. The data reflects that there are 16 students from 13 countries around the world are enrolled and study in the programme with the help of Erasmus Mundus and private funding for studies (SAR). The previous professional joint programme and now the joint academic programme has been capable to attract student from the entire world. It is assumed that graduates of the programme will be fully prepared for the international labour market in the field of social work as was found out during the site visit. There is sufficient evidence of the sustainability of the joint master programme after the EU grant will be terminated. In addition, the study programme fits to the current social condition where demand for social works professional is very high.

2.1.5. The content of master's studies is designed in such a way that students chose to pursue further their educational path after graduation from the professional bachelor's programme or any bachelor's programme in social sciences, health care, education, and humanities. However, the requirements for English language proficiency might be an obstacle for the Latvia students to apply for the programme as the programme is designed for international students.

The joint Master's study programme "Social Work with Children and Youth" is compliant with the requirements set for the joint study programme (Law on Higher Education Institutions, Section 55.1). All implementing universities are accredited, and they implement licensed and accredited study programmes in social work. All 4 universities are higher education institutions of the same level, and they implement the same level study programmes in social work. Each partner institution fulfils at least one tenth of the study programme "Social Work with Children and
Youth" in accordance with the concluded Consortium Agreement.The overall structure of the proposed master's
programme demonstrates that the programme is a unified whole. In addition, mobility of the teaching staff involved is an integral part of the study programme. Each study course is coordinated and provided with teaching staff from at least two partner universities.

The development and vision towards implementation of the joint study programme are fully justified as all partners take serious their assignment and role in the ERASMUS MUNDUS project that is behind the programme.

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

Thejoint academic master's study programme "Social work with Children and Youth" is implemented with the effort of four universities. Thus, it is a good example of the internationalisation of studies. The programme substantially enriched the study arena in Latvia

Strengths:
1. The joint academic master's study programme is secure as long as there is EU funding.

Weaknesses
1. There are plans for sustainability of the programme after EU funding will be over, however, this still remains uncertain.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The whole structure of the study programme and the results to be achieved in Master studies correspond to Latvian National Academic Education Standards and Latvian Qualifications Framework (SAR, p. 179) and complies with the requirements of the national legal framework in higher education of the partner universities participating in implementation of the study programme. The content of study programme consists of theoretical courses (72 ECTS), a scientific research internship (6 ECTS) and a scientific paper (42 ECTS).

The volume, duration, structure and learning outcomes of the StP comply with the requirements of Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 240 "Regulations on the National Standard of Academic Education". (Annex 17). The results to be achieved complies with the knowledge, skills and competencies with the Latvian Qualifications Framework level 7.

The international SP "Social Work with Children and Youth" complies with the RSU strategy and study direction — Social Welfare. As this StP is made on the basis of the joint professional Master's SP "Social Work with Children and Youth" (in collaboration with MRU), RSU already has a history and experience of implementing the StP. In the second semester, studies take place at RSU, and the RSU lecturers are highly experienced and qualified professionals as a teachers and leading persons of study courses covering the issues of social work with youth, children and families.

According to SAR, students of the study programme rotate between countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Portugal) and Consortium partner universities. The student rotation plan reflects, that The RSU is responsible for the 2nd semester. Meanwhile, there are twinning principle introduced (two teachers from the different countries per course) to ensure integrity of the programme.

2.2.2. The awarding of a degree is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant field of science - a final scientific paper (42 ECTS). The joint Master's programme is based on European social work traditions although its focus (children and youth) and internationality give the program uniqueness and new opportunities for students.

2.2.3. As the SAR points out the content of study courses enables students to acquire knowledge

and skills necessary for the development of social work and social services for children and youth. The study courses introduce students to social work theories, and social work with families, as the basics for professional social work. However, the topics on professional ethics as one of the essential aspects of professional activity are not covered in study courses and should be considered in study programme.

The joint Master's programme presents an interdisciplinary approach to the issues of children and youth considering and analysing the problems of these groups within the framework of health and political sciences, psychology and sociology. This approach will enable graduates to provide and organize specialized social work services for children and youth.

The study programme applies different study methods to ensure the implementation of the learning outcomes in promoting the acquisition of research skills and those needed for professional activities. As studies include contact lessons and independent studies, a variety of study methods are used such as group work, role-play, cooperative learning, discussions, online support methods, self-reflection, consultations, diaries, etc. A significant role in practical studies plays study tours. (SAR, p. 183). Interactive study methods allow students to understand intercultural peculiarities in the organization and implementation of social work, and thus broaden the understanding of social work as a professional activity.

During the Expert Group meeting, students mentioned the inconsistency in the organization of assignments and repetition of topics within some study courses in case more than one lecture is responsible for the same course. Students expect better tools for communication with lecturers as some e-platform not only email currently used for communication. Better assistance for student affairs was mentioned during the meeting too.

2.2.4. According to the SAR, the documents regulating the organization of the internship have been created, such as the Regulations of the Internship for students, the Agreement of internship, Reference form of the internship supervisor. Introductory lecture and seminar, where the tasks and instructions on research internship are provided. The study programme partner university has provided an internship supervisor during the study process, who ensures the organization of the internship (SAR, p. 184.)

The student is free to choose the place of practice and, according to the SAR, there is a wide enough choice of organizations to suit not only the interests of the student but the connection with the topic of the master's thesis as well. (SAR, p. 184) As it was clarified during the meeting, the internship is provided at the partner university of the study program Catholic University of Ružomberok (Slovakia). In Latvia, this is complicated by the lack of English-speaking practice leaders in the institutions, but in Slovakia, there are a lot of places where students and supervisors of practice can communicate in English.

2.2.5. Not apllicable.

2.2.6. According to the SAR, DWSW in cooperation with MRU offered thematic directions for Master theses based on the cooperation agreement between universities and guidelines proposed by the Latvian Ministry of Welfare. The topics are relevant to the social work field in working with children and youth and the priorities of social work and social development of each country participating in the study programme implementation will be discussed (SAR, p.185).

Experts' Group meeting with students from the Joint Master programme showed that students prefer

to explore their chosen topic, instead of those offered by teachers. As the meeting with the program, coordinators indicated, the majority of students represent Africa and Asia, so it would be important for the study programme to enable students from other (non-European) countries to explore the issues of social work with children and youth relevant to their country and to apply topics that meet the interests of these students.

Students expect better organization of the thesis process, including the availability of a supervisor, prior introduction of students to the topics of the lecturers, and organization of the choice of topic.

The Joint Master Program of Social Work with Children and Youth presents the interdisciplinary approach as the uniqueness of this programme. It is not clear if there are some plans to develop international research projects on the topics of the social welfare of children and youth. As pointed out in the SAR teachers of the Joint Master Programme are planning to be a joint project from 2022 to 2027.

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

The structure and content of the study programme correspond to Latvian and European regulations and recommendations on academic education standards as well as strategies for developing policies and programmes considering the issues of children and youth. The aims and content of study courses correspond to the study programme learning outcomes. A range of interactive study methods allows students to understand intercultural peculiarities and enables students to integrate theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

Strengths:
1. The focus of the study programme and programme internationality give the program uniqueness and new opportunities for students.

Weaknesses:
1. Although the topics on professional ethics are not presented in the study programme.
2. Study process organization and implementation within the study course taught by more than one teacher needs more organization and consistency.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The joint study academic programme is interdisciplinary and combines social work, education, pedagogy and intercultural communication. The programme is implemented by 4 EU universities and they all do significant research in the field.
The SP, which will train social work professionals who are able to organize social work and specialize in providing social work and
services to families, children and young people, is the only joint European Master's SP in the Baltic region.

The StP is based on and follows the current strategies and needs for developing and strengthening children, youth and family policies nationally and internationally (Youth Sector Srtategy 2030; Latvian National Developmental Plan) (SAR, p.180). StP was developed by

analysing the content and experiences of other European Universities in the field of social work. Content and organization of StP is reviewed and improved on the basis of feedback of service providers and students themselves.

Master's degree is awarded after defending the final thesis which confirms student's ability of independent research work.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. According to the SAR, students of the study programme rotate between countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Portugal) and Consortium partner universities. Thus, they use all the resources of the university where they are located according to the semester.

In every university, there are local coordinators responsible for the management as well for the academic part. Appropriate academic staff is involved to ensure the study process. Each university provides the necessary resources for studies, such as those used by local university students - facilities with equipment, a library with its resources, and e-environment resources such as Moodle (or another system). The study provisions scientific support, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision fully comply with the implementation of the programme.

This means that there is not only a good physical environment (modern, accessible infrastructure, free wi-fi, study desks, silent boxes etc.), but also access to study materials, and e-resources. In addition, recently all of the necessary information about the study life has been compiled in one single location online where you can find essentially anything you might need (reglementations, tutorials for using other systems, FAQ, etc.) The library has all necessary resources (books, journals, access to databases, etc.).

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3. According to the SAR, it is planned that the tuition fee for students from the programme countries is set at 2,875 EUR, and for the partner countries 3,875 EUR per year, but at the moment the study program European Joint Master in Social Work with Children and Youth is funded by an Erasmus Mundus project grant with total funding of 2,434,000 EUR.

The mentioned funding covers various expenses related to the provision of studies: the procedure for attracting, evaluating and admitting students, tuition fees, scholarships, accommodation and transport expenses, etc. As SAR shows, RSU expenses are related to remuneration of staff, taxes etc. and all other resources provided by the university – as IT, infrastructure etc.

As SAR shows there are plans that by the beginning of the study year 2023 the program will be studied by at least 92 students, 23 of them will be students from Latvia that mean, that in one study year – 12 students. Although the purpose of the funding provides, the SAR does not specify how students are attracted and how the program is advertised and popularized in the environment of potential students. During the meeting with the director of the study, program experts learned that there are no students from Latvia this academic year as well as from Lithuania and Slovakia.

During the meeting, both with bachelor's and master's students and graduates, it was concluded that students mostly study and work at the same time, thus reducing their opportunities to participate in such a program, and employers do not support long absences. The head of the

programme also pointed out that English is a barrier to why local students do not choose to study in this program. That means that it is necessary to develop a strategy how to attract the appropriate students and how to reach employers, especially in the field of child and youth welfare in order to disseminate information for this opportunity.

Since this is a joint study programme with other higher education institutions in addition to the strong base resources the RSU provides, there are additional resources (both physical and e-environment) provided by the other consortium members which improves the base situation even further.

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

RSU provides a modern study environment for students and academic staff that creates all the prerequisites for the successful achievement of the learning outcomes.

Strengths:
1. Joint resources with the other consortium members.
2. The resources and provision of the study programme are at an extremely high standard.

Weaknesses:
1. There are no local students for this programme.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, scientific support, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision are fully compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. There is evidence that the qualification of the teaching staff involved in the joint academic Master's Study Program "Social Work with Children and Youth" complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments and the conditions for the implementation of the study program. As SAR shows, the study program from RSU employs a sufficient number of lecturers with the appropriate level of qualification who participate in the implementation of the study program, from nine lecturers, six are elected to academic positions at RSU, and five of them have master's degree and 4 doctoral degree (SAR, Annex 6.1). According to SAR, there is evidence, that other international teaching staff involved in the study programme are also appropriate and highly qualified, consistent with European Commission's, Erasmus + guidelines, the quality standards established by Bologna Process and Consortium Agreement (SAR, p. 188).

2.4.2. The qualifications of the teaching staff member align with the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. The Scientific, teaching, and professional

skills of the teaching staff cover all areas needed to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. There is evidence, that all teachers take part in domestic and foreign conferences, making scientific research relevant for the study field (SAR, Annex 6.1).

During the meeting with the director of the program, it was found out that, the director of the academic Master's Study Program "Social Work with Children and Youth" currently studying for a doctoral study, which will have a positive effect on the future.

2.4.3. Not applicable

2.4.4. There is evidence that academic staff have publications related to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the transformative changes in social services, crisis management, social work practices with high-risk families, young people and children with special needs, and family policy. etc. There have also been international researches published in international journals and databases, such as the protection of children's rights, families and their lifestyles in Central and Western Europe, and more.

There is evidence that five of the academic staff have published in peer-reviewed publications over the past six years, including international ones, and one has more than 17 years of experience in the field.

As the SAR shows, teachers involved in compulsory subjects directly related to social work publish their articles and research mainly in collections of articles published by RSU, for example, Social Work: Education, Research, Practice, or conference proceedings books of conferences organized by RSU (SAR, Annex 6.4) reaching the compatibility that academic staff in the last six year have published in peer-reviewed editions.

With funding from RSU, projects or other sources, teaching staff participated and currently are involved in several ongoing international research projects. Regular international conferences organized by Department became a part of the RSU International Research Week programme and involves partners from different countries.

2.4.5. As mentioned in SAR, a mechanism has been established in which cooperation between the MRU, RSU, CU and ISTE-IUL participating teaching staff takes place (SAR, p. 190). There are internal procedures that regulate the management of the study programme, cooperation planning and quality control options. The Joint Master Program of Social Work with Children and Youth presents the interdisciplinary approach as the uniqueness of this program. It is not clear if there are some plans to develop international research projects on the topics of the social welfare of children and youth. As pointed out in the SAR (p. 67) teachers of the Joint Master Program are planning a joint project from 2022 to 2027.

To achieve the study results, there are regular meetings of the Cooperation Council, meetings between the docents involved in the study course from different universities, methodological discussion groups, etc. However, in meeting with international academic staff, the experts found that cooperation between all four partners involved is still a challenge and different cooperation aspects would still be improved. But overall, all the teachers were very motivated and showed motivation, desire and willingness to cooperate better. Students also pointed out the cooperation between teachers as one of the rare disadvantages. According to the SAR (p. 191), regular observation is also performed.

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

The qualifications of the teaching staff member align with the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. The Scientific, teaching, and professional skills of the teaching staff cover all areas needed to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

Strengths:
1. Highly qualified lecturers are employed in the implementation of the study programme.

Weaknesses:
1. Cooperation between teachers from different universities needs to be improved.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The qualifications of the teaching staff member align with the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.
   The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the joint academic
   Master's Study Program "Social Work with Children and Youth" complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The joint academic Master's SP "Social Work with Children and Youth" is designed, considering the general requirements in the Master's SP (Regulations on the National Academic Education Standard, Cabinet Regulation No 240).

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

   Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the

requirements set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two and Section 562 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The diploma will be issued by Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (Portugal); it will be signed by the rectors of all 4 higher education institutions. Paragraph 10 of Cabinet Regulation No 202 "Procedures for Issuing State-Recognised Higher Education Documents" provides that if a joint diploma is prepared and issued by a foreign partner institution, such diploma, regardless of its form, is recognised in
Latvia if it is signed by the head of the participating Latvian higher education institution that takes part in the implementation of the joint programme or an authorised official thereof. According to the Consortium Agreement, the joint diploma will not be
awarded by RSU but by the University of Lisbon (ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Avenida das Forças Armadas, 1649-026 Lisboa). Consequently, these diplomas are not subject to the general requirements of Cabinet Regulation No 202 and the exception set out in Paragraph 10 applies.

The template of the diploma is enclosed to the SAR.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The list of academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme is included in the annexe of the SAR. Number of professors and associate professors, who are elected to academic positions in the university and participating in the implementation of the compulsory part and the limited elective part of academic study programme exceeds the threshold stated in the law - five.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The attached CVs of the teaching staff confirm that state language proficiency is compliant with regulations No. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff involved in the implementation of the joint master professional study programme have at least B2-level knowledge.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement provided in the annexe of the SAR includes all mandatory provisions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

According to the Consortium agreement, the students can continue to study in any of the partner university, in case the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is a guarantee (included in the annexe, dated November 16, 2021) stated that RSU guarantees compensation for damages caused to the student if, due to RSU conduct (act or omission), the study field "Social Welfare" is not accredited or the licenses of the study programmes belonging to the study direction are withdrawn, or the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The joint study programme fully complies with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The programme is well developed and fits all necessary the requirements stated in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education. The programme is compatible to Regulations on the National Academic Education Standard, Cabinet Regulation No 240.

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

The joint academic master's study programme "Social work with Children and Youth" is implemented with the effort of four universities. Thus, it is a good example of the internationalisation of studies.
The programme substantially enriched the study arena in Latvia.
The focus of the study programme and programme internationality give the program uniqueness and new opportunities for students. The study provisions scientific support, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision fully comply with the implementation of the programme.

Strengths:
1. The Joint Master Program of Social Work with Children and Youth presents the interdisciplinary approach as the uniqueness of this programme.
2. The Scientific, teaching, and professional skills of the teaching staff cover all areas needed to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

Weaknesses:
1. At the moment, it is not clear if there are some plans to develop international research projects on the topics of the social welfare of children and youth.
2. As the study programme is linked to the international project, cooperation between teachers from different universities needs to be improved.
3. . There are plans for sustainability of the programme after EU funding will be over, however, this still remains uncertain.

Evaluation of the study programme "Social Work with Children and Youth"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Social Work with Children and Youth"

Short-term recommendations

The development of more effective means of communication with teachers, the possibility for students to choose their research topics corresponding to study programme direction and student interest would be important in the implementation of a student-centred study process in the programme.
To develope a strategy for attracting local students.

Long-term recommendations

To develop and improve cooperation among partner universities for implementation of the joint study programme.
To design financial sustainability plan for the study programme after EU funding will be over.
To include topics covering knowledge and skills of professional ethics in the study courses.

II - "Social Work" ASSESSMENT

II - "Social Work" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The goal of the professional master's study programme "Social Work" is to prepare high-level professional specialists, who are capable to implement social change initiatives by actively being involved in the research of the causes of social problems that are important to society and being leaders in the field.Thus, the study programme fully corresponds to the study field.

2.1.2. The professional master's study programme is titled "Social Work". The degree to be acquired, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are generally coherent and relevant to the topic.

The professional master's study programme "Social work" is implemented in Latvian as full-time studies in 1 year 6 month (60 CP) period and part-time studies in 2 years (60 CP) for the graduates of the professional bachelor programme in social work. Graduates of any other social science, education, health care and humanities programme are expected to study in the programme at full-time studies in 2 years or 2 years and 6 months with 80 CP.

The students are awarded a Professional Master's degree in Social Work and the qualification obtained -a leading social worker. The content of master's studies is coherent with the professional bachelor's degree programme if students chose to pursue further their educational path after graduation from the professional bachelor's programme or any bachelor's programme in social sciences, health care, education, and humanities. The programme is designed mainly for local students and the local labour market, thus the internationalisation of studies and international mobility of students (in and out) is uncertain and remain low.

2.1.3. The aim of the study programme has been updated using the current European and Latvian education policy documents, as well as based on the results of surveys of employers and graduates and the professional standard of the leading social worker. At the result, the clarified aims fully fits to the content of the programme and are well defined.

2.1.4. Data reflects that last time 12 students were enrolled in 2015/2016 for full-time studies (SAR, Annex 16). Meanwhile, data demonstrate (SAR, Annex 16) that part-time studies are more popular reaching several students above 15 in each study year. It should be noted the part-time study programme is fully financed from the student fees. The professional study programme fully is tailored to capture the national demand thus internationalisation opportunities are limited. in addition, the drop-out rate of students during Master's studies has been extremely low. Mostly students decide to prolong the studies beyond the 2 year period based on the family issues of financial considereations.

Graduates of the programme are fully prepared for the labour market in the field of the social work as was found out during the site visit.

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

The professional master the study programme "Social Work" is also designed mainly for local students. The students prefer to study part-time programme because of the flexibility to join the study path and professional activities.

Strengths:
1. The professional master's study programme is secure as long as there is a national demand and the graduates are capable to be employed in their field or similar policy fields.
2. There is a synergy in the content between the professional bachelor's programme and the professional master's programme "Social work".

Weaknesses:
1. As the professional master`s study programme is designed for the local students with a national focus, the internationalisation of studies and international mobility of students (in and out) is uncertain.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The learning outcomes of the MA study programme correspond to national and global regulations and recommendations. The Mapping system developed by RSU illustrates the logic and consistency of the content of Master study programme (SAR, Annex 18.1). According to the SAR, the study programme cooperation with employers of social services, and policymakers provides the opportunity to understand, assess and develop the content of the study programme. The Mapping system presented in SAR shows that the study programme tasks and results correspond with the professional standard (SAR, Annex 18.2) required for a leading social worker and encompasses knowledge, skills and competencies needed to achieve these results.

As pointed out in SAR, the content of the Master's study programme is determined by professional standards which „determines the content of the Master's StP for obtaining a professional Master's degree with the qualification of a leading social worker" (SAR, p. 92). The content of existing study courses covers national and European social policy, and human rights issues, presents quality and change management and these courses provide useful knowledge for leaders-to-be. However, some courses and topics directly related to developing students' leadership skills could be integrated into the programme. During the Expert Group visit study programme, students expressed a desire to study more courses orientated to the acquisition of leadership skills.

The Master's study programme plan (SAR, Annex 19) and the content of the study courses arouse the question about the ability to meet professional standards for those who started their Master's studies without the qualification of a social worker. The 5th learning outcome of study programme (SAR, 18.1) points out the ability to „ perform social work with individuals, family and group", however, it is not clear when and how students without a Bachelor's degree in social work are introduced to the main theories, methods and professional ethics as the basics for social work profession.

StP courses as "Psychosocial Support and Principles of Psychotherapy in Social Work", "Mediation in Theory and Practice", "Family Mediation" provide students with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills in social work, which is important in the any master's program. But before that, students should be introduced to the basics of social work. As the fundamentals of professional social work are essential for future leaders as well.

The Master's StP extended the requirements for those students without a previous social worker qualification at the bachelor's level.
Due to these changes, an 80 CP plan was introduced for students without previous social work education, while students with previous social work education study according to the 60 CP plan. The both programme varialts (80 CP and 60CP) have qualification examination as the national degree examination that was introduced in 2015.

2.2.2. According to SAR, a Master's degree confirms students' ability scientifically and practically analyze issues of social work and social policy integrating theoretical knowledge and practical skills and combining knowledge from different fields.

2.2.3. The study programme applies different study methods to ensure the implementation of the learning outcomes in promoting the acquisition of research skills and those needed for professional activities. Such study methods as group work, role-play, cooperative learning, and discussions are used in the study programme. Problem-based learning (PBL), as a traditional problem-solving approach used in social work education, is combined with such interactive study methods as client simulation and role play. The combination of different study methods facilitates the connection of theoretical knowledge and professional practical skills (SAR, pp. 105-106). During the Expert Group visit, students emphasized the need for more interactive study methods (discussions), especially while studying mediation courses.

According to the SAR, the content of study courses and placement is reviewed and improved responding to employers' opinions and results of the survey conducted with students who expressed the need to link theory more closely to practice. Based on service providers' opinion, StP study courses and placement includes tasks orientated to an analysis of complex professional problems in the field of social work (SAR, p. 106).

SAR notes that the share of independent work in part-time studies is higher. The study programme needs to ensure the assistance for students in the process of independent work by applying different forms such as individual, group consultations and supervision. „Contact hours" in study course descriptions include „lectures" and „classes", so it is not clear how many hours are allocated for consultations (SAR, Annex 20.1).

2.2.4. According to SAR, the documents regulating the organization of the internship have been created, such as the Regulations of the Internship, the internship manuals, the internship diary - a report. Aims and objectives are clearly defined and understandable. The results of the internship are analysed, and if necessary, taking into account the obtained conclusions and students' recommendations, adjustments are made (SAR, p.108 and Annex 9). Over time, the practice is adjusted by innovations - changes in regulatory enactments and professional standard of social work profession, as well as the need to introduce additional study courses. At the moment match to all requirements and is organized according to different basic education at the Bachelor's level.

As mentioned in SAR and was also approved by the director of the study program during the meeting Social work research practice students can choose, accordingly to professional Master's

study program "Social Work" content. Respectively, the choice could be made accordingly with three compulsory elective models - mediation and psychosocial work, quality management of organizations and social services, and a mixed module to equalize previously acquired courses. The practice and its goals are adapted accordingly, respectively in the micro-practice of social work with the client or specialization in the practice of mezzo and macro practice.

SAR notes, that RSU has developed quite enough field of internship. A tripartite cooperation agreement has been concluded between RSU, the Ministry of Welfare and the Latvian Association of Local Governments. There is also a cooperation agreement with the Welfare Department of the Riga City Council, which subordinates various municipal institutions - Riga Social Service, Riga Municipality and Children's Youth Centre, Riga Shelter, social care and rehabilitation institutions, Riga's hospitals, etc., However, if we take into account that the internship is planned at the mezzo and macro level, there are relatively few institutions from the mezzo and macro levels among the internship providers. During the meeting, the director of the study program mentioned that in the future it is planned to address and establish cooperation relations with organizations of these levels as well.

According to the SAR, students can also do internships in other institutions - both state and municipal, as well as NGOs. In such cases, a separate tripartite agreement is concluded between the student, the institution and RSU. In these situations, however, it is not clear how the collaboration between the practice leader and RSU takes place.

Besides social work research practice students have academic practice and according to SAR next year it will be "Management of learning and teaching activities for professional development", and in the end, "Qualification placement" (20 CP).

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. Students conduct their final thesis according to the requirements of RSU regulations and methodological instructions developed by DWSW. Appropriate study courses on scientific research methodology and research data analysis are presented in StP (SAR, Annex 19).

The examples of research topics and research questions listed in SAR are relevant to the research directions proposed by the Ministry of Welfare and reflect the current issues in the field of social work. As the professional standards emphasize the qualifications of leading social workers more quantitative and qualitative research on leadership issues could help the StP to improve the content by making the appropriate changes in study courses and study methods applied.

The description of the SAR has shown that DWSW analyses the relevance of methodological issues during the development of the final theses. Based on the problems revealed by the Research competence survey and graph some changes were made in the Master's programme to decrease students' stress and improve their skills and competencies required in research (SAR, pp. 112-113). The study field's efforts to analyze the thesis preparation process based on student feedback are critical in achieving a student-centred study model.

The description of the SAR has shown that DWSW analyse the relevance of methodological issues during the development of final theses. Based on the problems revealed by Research competence survey and graph some changes were made in Master programe in order to decrease students' stress and improve their skills and competences required in research (SAR, pp. 112-113). The study field's efforts to analyze the thesis preparation process based on student feedback are critical in

achieving a student-centered study model. The topic of the final thesis and the scientific supervisor are approved 6 months before the defence of the thesis (SAR, p. 110). Perhaps an earlier appointment of a supervisor and his/her assistance and support would help students in developing their research plan and could reduce the stress experienced by students.

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

The learning outcomes of the study programme correspond to national and global regulations and recommendations although some focus on the development of leadership skills could be more emphasized and expressed in courses and research. To achieve learning outcomes, the study programme combines different study methods although the application of interactive methods could be strengthened. Master thesis topics and research questions are relevant to the research directions proposed by the Ministry of Welfare and reflect the current issues in the field of social work. At the moment internships match to all requirements and are organized according to different basic education at the Bachelor's level. The results of the internship are analysed, and if necessary, taking into account the obtained conclusions and students' recommendations, adjustments are made.

Strengths:
1. The learning outcomes of the MA study programme correspond to national and global regulations and recommendations.

Weaknesses:
1.Issues concerning internships at the mezzo and macro level, as well as concluding cooperation agreements with other organizations and organizing training practice leaders of organizations.
2. Some courses and topics directly related to developing students' leadership skills could be integrated into the programme.

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

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The study programme is based on the achievements and findings in the field.
   According the results presented by Latvian Ministry of Economics the shortage of profesionals practicing in health care and social welfare area is increasing. The employment rates and feedback from StP graduates show that study programe provides graduates with knowledge and skills relevant for the field (SAR, 101). Based on the discussions and employers participation as well as current issues in the field of social work, the study content and methods are updated and necessary changes made. For example, introducing new study courses ("Social Work in Rural Community"), study methods (simulation approach), research topics (provision and quality assessment of social services, Covid-19 pandemic in high risk families and etc.)

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.As mentioned in SAR and as the experts confirmed during the visit to RSU, the common RSU infrastructure is used to provide the study program - the premises are modern, comfortable and centred on students and study processes, the study environment (doors, corridors, auditoriums, illuminated information boards, etc.) is inclusive. Suitable for persons with movement, visual,

hearing or mental disabilities. Special guidelines have been developed (SAR, p. 46).

The premises have an information centre, a library with a reading room for individual work, a simulation cabinet, a café with self-service facilities, corridors comfortable for students, equipped with seating and special quiet rooms with sound absorption. The provision of technical and IT solutions (with projectors, interactive whiteboards, free access to the Internet and Wi-Fi, sound system, etc.) in the auditoriums is at a high level. This means that there is not only a good physical environment (modern, accessible infrastructure, free wi-fi, study desks, silent boxes etc.), but also access to study materials, e-resources. In addition recently all of the necessary information about the study life has been compiled in one single location online where you can find essentially anything you might need (reglementations, tutorials for using other systems, FAQ, etc.)

E-studies environment Moodle is used as a solution with the highest availability easy and fast to use in everyday life for teaching staff and for students. There is all the necessary information about study process such as course descriptions, information about tests, regular assignments, required literature.

The latest literature in different languages on the relevant fields is regularly purchased. During the visit in library the teaching staff stated that they have an opportunity to apply for the literature and there are planned finances for this purpose every year. There is access to large online databases of electronic full-text journals and e-books, for example, Academic Collection (EBSCO), SAGE Premier 2022, etc. All in all, the library has all necessary resources (books, journals, access to databases, etc.).

2.3.2. Not appliccable

2.3.3. The RSU Professional Master's study program can theoretically be acquired in full-time and part-time programs. However, as mentioned in the SAR, the full-time study program is not implemented at present (from the study year 2014/2015) due to the lack of state budget study places. Both part-time on-site programs (2 and 2,5 years) are funded by private or legal persons, there are no budget places. During the meeting, the director of the program mentioned that there is regular communication with the Ministry of Welfare and the Riga City Council about the financing of study places. During the conversation, she also confirmed that information has been received about 10 state-funded budget places, however, their distribution (how many bachelor's and how many master's) is not known at the moment.

Tuition fees have been agreed at the RSU Rectorate and last updated in 2021. Tuition fees are determined taking into account the costs related to the academic staff, the resources of the departments, the duration and form of studies (SAR, 115-116).

In order to ensure the profitability of the study program, the average number of students must be 20 students in the 2-year program, but 33 students in the 2,5-year program. If we look at the statistics (SAR, Annex 16, p.1), despite the fact that the number of enrolled students is relatively stable, it is still insufficient. This means that, for an increasing number of students, a strategy of attracting students and advertising the social work-study program as well as the social work profession is necessary.

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

RSU provides a modern study environment for students and academic staff that creates all the prerequisites for the successful achievement of the learning outcomes. The study provisions scientific support, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision fully comply with the implementation of the programme.

Strengths:
1. The resources and provision of the study programme are at an extremly high standard.

Weaknesses:
None

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, scientific support, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision are fully compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. There is evidence that the qualification of the teaching staff involved in the professional master's study program complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. The qualifications of the teaching staff member align with the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. Both scientific, teaching and professional skills of the teaching staff cover all areas needed to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

Although most of the teachers' biographies show that their English language skills are at least level B, it was observed at the meeting that some of them had difficulty speaking English, which can raise various questions about the use of the latest literature, in participation in international research ore sharing experience with foreign colleagues.

2.4.2. As SAR shows, the study program employs a sufficient number of lecturers with the appropriate level of qualification and includes guest lectures of the appropriate qualification who participate in the implementation of the study program, for example, of 34 lecturers involved, 18 lecturers have a doctoral degree, but 16 have a master's degree (Annexes 24.7 and 6.1). 12 lecturers are in RSU in academic positions.

There is a small proportion of teachers currently working in social work or with a basic social work education, which may be the reason why all three program directors give lectures in all three study programs, as well as all three participate in scientific research. The Head of the Department of Welfare and Social Work has a particularly heavy workload.

During the meeting with the director of the program, the experts found that two lecturers who are

equally involved in the implementation of the professional master's program "Social Work" and at the same time are the directors of the professional bachelor's program "Social Work" one and other- the director of joint Masters programme "Social Work with Children and Youth", currently studying for a doctoral study.

According to the SAR, the teaching staff is stable, although there have been changes in staff related to the interaction between succession and generations, but this has not affected the quality of the study program and is in line with regulatory requirements. Two guest lecturers from Slovakia and Estonia are involved. Although SAR mentions that lecturers have both academic and practical work experience in the social field, looking at the CVs in the appendix, it can be concluded that the practical work experience in different social work levels is relatively small.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. There is evidence that teachers publish their work in domestic and foreign journals, as well as in domestic and international publicly available databases. With funding from RSU, projects or other sources, faculty members participate in conferences and publish different scientific publications. It can be seen that directors of the study programs and other lecturers as well, involved in all three study programs work together to develop research and publish joint publications. (SAR, Annex 6.1). Thus, the academic staff comply to the requirements that each member of the academic staff in the last six years published in peer-reviewed editions, including international editions.

There is evidence that over the past six years each member of the academic staff have published in peer-reviewed editions including international editions.(Anex 6.1)

As SER shows, teachers involved in compulsory subjects directly related to social work publish their articles and research mainly in collections of articles published by RSU, for example, Social Work: Education, Research, Practice, or conference proceedings books of conferences organized by RSU (SAR, Annex 6.4). There is also evidence that most teaching staff have long experience in the field.

2.4.5. RSU has established different mechanisms for the cooperation of teaching and support staff in the implementation of the study program. There are internal procedures that regulate the management of the study programme, cooperation planning and quality control options. The teaching staff has regular meetings to assure the activities in the program are carried on according to the plan. According to SAR, regular observation is also performed.

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

The qualifications of the teaching staff member align with the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. Both scientific, teaching, and professional skills of the teaching staff cover all areas needed to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. As there are limited number of lecturers with practical work experience and experience with work experience at the mezzo and macro-level of social work, they do face extensive workload.

Strengths:
1. In the implementation of the program, there is a high number of lecturers with doctoral degrees.
2. RSU has established mechanisms that ensure the work of the teaching and support staff.
3. There is strong cooperation between the teaching staff of all three study programmes and their leaders regard to research and publications

Weaknesses:

1. The small number of lecturers with work experience at the mezzo and macro-level of social work
2. The practical work experience in different social work levels is relatively small.
3. There is an evident lack or non-use of English during the study process.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The qualification of the academic staff members and visiting academic staff are appropriate the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the legal framework.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme fully complies with the Professional Higher Education Standard.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with a valid professional standard of in the field of social work - "a leading social worker", approved by the Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment on August 11, 2021.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The course descriptions contain all necessary information related the study course. In particular, the course descriptions cover the requirements of the study course; the aims the study course and the planned learning outcomes; the content of the study; the study course time plan, mandatory and supplementary literature, other sources of information; the organisation and tasks for the independent work of students as well as the evaluation criteria of learning outcomes.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The diploma sample issued to graduates complies with the Cabinet Regulations No 202.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The attached CVs of the teaching staff confirm that state language proficiency is compliant with regulations No. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement provided in the annexe of the SAR includes all mandatory provisions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is an agreement with University of Latvia, signed electronically back in May 11, 2021. According to the agreement, in case the implementation of the RSU professional masters study programme "Social work" is terminated, the students shall be admitted to the equal study

programme of the University of Latvia.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is a guarantee (included in the annexe, dated November 16, 2021) stated that RSU guarantees compensation for damages caused to the student if, due to RSU conduct (act or omission), the study field "Social Work" is not accredited or the licenses of the study programmes belonging to the study direction are withdrawn, or the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The programme is well developed and fits all necessary the requirements stated in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education and other regulatory enactments.

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

The professional master the study programme "Social work" is also designed mainly for local students. The students prefer to study part-time programme because of the flexibility to join the study path and professional activities.

The professional master's study programme "Social work" is implemented in Latvian as full-time studies in 1 year 6 month (60 CP) period and part-time studies in 2 years (60 CP) for the graduates of the professional bachelor programme in social work. Graduates of any other social science, education, health care and humanities programme are expected to study in the programme at full-time studies in 2 years or 2 years and 6 months with 80 CP. This approach is fully justified.

Strengths:
1. The professional master's study programme is secure as long as there is a national demand and the graduates are capable to be employed in their field or similar policy fields.
2. There is a synergy in the content between the professional bachelor's programme and the professional master's programme "Social Work".
3. Scientific, teaching and professional skills of the teaching staff cover all areas needed to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

Weaknesses:

1. As the professional master`s study programme is designed for the local students with a national focus, the internationalisation of studies and international mobility of students (in and out) is uncertain.

2. Issues concerning internships at the mezzo and macro level, as well as concluding cooperation agreements with other organizations and organizing training practice leaders of organizations.

3. At the moment, there are too few lecturers with social work education are involved in the programme.

Evaluation of the study programme "Social Work"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Social Work"

Short-term recommendations

To strengthen English knowledge skills using opportunities offered by RSU internal resources or other sources like international projects
On annual bases to analyse in-depth factors of students drop-outs and to implements mechanisms for limiting drop-outs

Long-term recommendations

To increase the number of teachers with social work education and practical experience on different social work levels.
To increase the capacity of the teaching staff to strengthen research, especially in the social work perspective.
To strengthen internationalisation and student outgoing mobility.
To include in the programme topics and apply appropriate study methods which ensure development of students' practical leadership skills.

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

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

Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:	Fully compliant		RSU has a fully operating study quality management system along with procedural documents. The amount of different quality assurance tools used is impressive in scope and content. All in all, the internal quality assurance system ensures student-centered and sustainable higher education. Internal quality assurance system in RSU is used well and efficiently to create the best conditions for further improvement to the study field.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)		Partially compliant	There is a lack of specific focus of the field of Social Welfare on social work research. RSU and study field management have developed necessary mechanisms and tools for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research. Scientific research and the outcomes are integrated into the study process in the three study programmes. DWSW promotes, conducts, and plans national and international research focused on the field of social work with an aim to expand the research and to engage more researchers. It is likely that the efforts made by RSU and specifically DWSW to enable faculty and students to engage in and disseminate research will strengthen the field of social work.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.	Fully compliant			During the on-site visit both HEI and study field management showed that even though cooperation in Latvia is stronger than cooperation abroad, both directions are aimed at achieving the goals of the study field and to improve the experience during studies and coincides with the goal of creating knowledgeable, thoughtful and well respected experts in their field.
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.	Fully compliant			RSU has fully implemented the recommendations identified during the previous assessments (as accreditation as well as licencing and implementation of substantial changes).

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

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Social Work (42762)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
2	Social Work with Children and Youth (45762)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
3	Social Work (47762)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

No dissenting opinions.