

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Rīga Stradiņš University

Study field: Law

Experts:

1. Edvīns Danovskis (Chair of the Experts Group)
2. Thomas Hoffmann (Secretary of the Experts Group)
3. Achim Albrecht
4. Gatis Litvins (Employers' Confederation of Latvia)
5. Kristaps Opincāns (Student Union of Latvia)

## Summary Assessment of the Study Field

### Summary Assessment of the Study Field

The study direction 'Law' with its four sections of Study Programmes, divided into a Bachelor Programme, an Academic Masters and a Professional Masters Programme as well as a Doctoral Studies Programme - some of which are offered full time as well as on a part time basis -, is embedded into a larger environment of social studies.

The Study Direction is well established. All offered programmes are fully functional and demanded by students, although the number of enrolled students is slightly dropping as an effect of demographic developments. The panel has noticed that the drop-out rate of students, who on a regular basis study parallel to working fully in the labor market, is rather high and should be tackled with appropriate measures.

Study conditions and infrastructure are in excellent conditions. E-Learning has been steadily evolving. Students have voiced that the free access to the library e-resources (full text search and printing) from home and the access to all digitalized thesis papers directly from home would be beneficial and save time.

The study programmes heed in structure and contents the relevant standards and cater for the needs of full time students as well as part time students. In the field of specialisation, there is a laudable interconnection of the law sector to health care, medicine and pharmaceutical sector, which are a core competence of the university and provide as such a unique opportunity for the intertwining of law and medicine. The same is true for criminal law and criminal procedure law, given the historical and upheld relation of the university with the Latvian police force.

The Professional Master Programme is currently undergoing a reshuffle by means of which content should be made compliant with the upcoming and mandatory central state law exam when qualifying as lawyer. The endeavour to prepare the students for the crucial exam with its set standards is considerable and will have its effect on the further evolution of all Professional Master Law Programmes.

The teaching staff is overall qualified with a considerable higher ratio of guest lecturers than elected staff. Highly qualified practitioners in good numbers are to be found amongst the teaching staff. Research activities are reasonable. A bonus system is installed as incentive for scientific research of all kinds. Students are overall satisfied with the teaching methods and the availability of staff. The teaching staff itself is integrated into the strategic decision making procedures of the study direction.

Employers are closely connected to the study fields of law, providing for internships, employing graduates, giving out thesis topics etc. They also are on a regular basis asked for advice in strategic matters. Graduates feel that their studies have enabled them with perfect employability.

The panel was asked to assess also the planned distance learning studies in law. During the last months a distance learning infrastructure has been built which will allow remote digitalized studies. The faculty feels that there is a need for these remote studies with regular contact phases being managed via ZOOM. Latvian expatriates and students from distant Latvian provinces could benefit from this approach. The distance learning e-environment has been designed. However, the descriptions of the study courses need to be provided and the whole operations will only be functional earliest in winter term 2021 or later. This leaves the current concept of distance learning to be verified in terms of detailed contents, client demand and stable functioning.

Additionally, the panel was asked to assess also the planned implementation of study programmes taught in English, which will affect all study programmes. So far internationalisation plays an eminent role in the universities' development, but less so in law. So far staff and student mobility via Erasmus + is regular but sparse. There are active partnership agreements, but no cross-border research project or double degree diploma studies have emerged out of it so far. Incoming foreign students can take English classes from different parts of the social science field (e.g. political

sciences), but no law programme so far is taught in English. Even though certificates for English proficiency at B2 were provided, the fact that during the assessment session with this panel most of RSU's participants were not able to participate in the panel sessions in English indicates that only a relative small number of teaching staff is capable to teach law courses - be it in Latvian Law, European or international law - in fluent and good standard English, even though the staff is offered courses to brush up their language abilities for the future.

It has not become clear why all existing Law Programmes should be taught in English and by whom. Usually English language studies are offered in specially designed master or doctoral studies with a focus on international and European law subjects. Why Latvian or incoming foreign students should study an entire study programme on domestic law mainly in English remains unclear. A big question mark has to be placed especially on an English taught Professional Master Programme, which would primarily qualify Latvian students for the Latvian central exams and a future job as qualified lawyer in Latvia. The panel believes that this concept has to be thoroughly thought over and probably altered in places.

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

### **Analysis**

The aims of the study direction are clear and all are directed at ensuring qualitative education in the field of law. Although the self assessment report emphasizes that the study direction is linked with the Riga Stradiņš University long standing scientific and pedagogical activities in the field of medicine, this link is not shown in the aims of this particular direction. All of the aims of the study programme generally show that the study direction is intended for the purposes of classical legal education. Although the study programmes contain several courses in medical law, it does not seem that the potential for uniqueness is fully exposed in the context of RSU's expertise in the field of medicine. At the moment it seems that the study direction has historic roots within the University and its ambitions in the area of social sciences. Forecast regarding the needs of society are adequate and sufficient to convince that there is a demand for study programmes of this direction.

The management of the study direction seems to be working efficiently. Each director of the study programme is responsible for development and quality assurance in their programme. It does seem that all directors of study programmes have a common understanding about the significance and functionality of their study programmes within the whole structure of the study direction. It also was evident that the management of the study programmes receives a thorough and devoted assistance from the administrative departments of the university.

As far as can be concluded from the information provided by the university, the procedures regarding the admission of students, the recognition of the study period, professional experience, and the previously acquired formal and non-formal education as well as for the evaluation of the achievements and learning outcomes of the students have been implemented and are working well. It is noteworthy that there have been quite many submissions regarding the recognition of previously acquired professional experience (38 submissions for the last six years).

The university has adopted a Code of Ethics and is using the "Turnitin" system for identification of plagiarism. During the visit the representatives of the faculty provided information that very few cases of plagiarism have been detected. Such a situation, however, cannot lead to a conclusion that the practices regarding academic integrity are efficient. Plagiarism has many types, including compilations of works of other authors. Breaches of academic integrity may be particularly difficult to establish in part-time studies; therefore, it is recommended to use such forms and contents of

tests and research papers that eliminate breaches of academic integrity. It has been noted that in 2020 the RSU has approved Academic Integrity Policy and has included a separate section related to the academic integrity, examination of breaches and actions taken were included in RSU Academic Regulations. Although such regulations are necessary to deal with breaches of academic integrity and demonstrates the good will of the RSU to eliminate plagiarism and other breaches of academic integrity, it is advised to constantly observe that these provisions are effectively applied.

The information published on RSU's website regarding the relevant study programmes of the study field complies with the information available in the official registers. It provides important information for the candidates and the students and is published in all languages in which the study programmes are implemented. The website includes information on admission requirements, contents of the study programmes, and formal parameters of the programme (length, forms etc.). However, information in English is very limited - there is no description of the contents of the study programmes (courses) in English.

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

The management of the study direction is good, efficient and corresponds to all relevant criteria. The management structure is suitable for the study direction, and the information provided on RSU website is comprehensive, updated and detailed. Information provided in English, however, has potential for improvement.

Strengths:

- There is a significant potential for interdisciplinarity and uniqueness of the study direction;
- There is effective management and devoted administrative assistance from the university departments.

Weaknesses:

- Information provided in English has potential for improvement.

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

### **Analysis**

The University has a well-established centralized quality assurance system. There are many daily activities aimed at improving functionality and contents of all study programmes. Each year a self-assessment report is drafted for each study direction. The quality assurance policy is publicly available.

There are clear procedures regarding creation of new study programmes and methods of checking quality supervision. Each year the rector approves guidelines from the self-assessment report of the study programme for the purposes of improving quality of the programmes as well as to evaluate content of the programme. Particular importance is devoted to surveys and feedback from students. Unfortunately, quite few students participate in the surveys. For instance, regarding the bachelor's study programme in 2017 only 9 out of 39 graduates completed the survey regarding the study programme. In 2019 this number has been considerably improved. Although the output of the surveys could be larger, the surveys can give a sufficient insight regarding opinions on contents and functionality of the study programmes. It is noteworthy that employers give feedback not only through self assessment system but also are included in the commissions which evaluate the

bachelors' and masters' thesis.

The self- assessment report provides enough information to conclude that the University collects and analyses the information (statistics) on the relevant study programmes of the study direction on a regular basis and efficiently uses it to improve the study direction (student surveys, statistics regarding the number of students and their status etc.). As can be seen from the report, "every month, RSU collects the most up-to-date data on the number of students, including student status (active, inactive), type of tuition financing (state budget funds, paid studies). Information about the reasons for student drop-out is collected, compiled, and analysed, which is used to identify necessary improvements in the study programme."

Standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG have also been identified. The self- assessment report emphasizes three standards: student-centred learning, teaching and evaluation; ensuring the competence of the teaching staff and ensuring study resources and support to students.

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

Internal Quality System is functioning properly and provides sufficient improvements. Surveys could be disseminated/its usage should be promoted better, as the feedback turnover is generally rather low.

Strengths:

- There is a well-established and comprehensive centralized quality assurance system.

Weaknesses:

- There is little feedback from the students (quite few students participate in annual surveys).

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

#### **Analysis**

RSU has developed a system to determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study direction and the relevant study programmes. The amount of financial resources required for RSU study direction and programmes is determined according to a pre-defined methodology. The self-assessment report indicates income and expenditure items. The calculation of the study programme costs is clearly visible in the year, most of which is occupied by the salary fund of the academic staff.

Currently the amount of funding for the study direction and its programmes is sufficient. The financial resources of the study direction "Law" are based on the revenues from tuition fees paid by the students themselves or their employers.

Tuition fees are significantly higher than the average cost per student. RSU explained that the tuition fee does not reflect the average income per student, because in a number of cases the full tuition fee is not received:

- a) when tuition fee discounts are applied (outstanding student discount, family discount, sports excellence discount, graduate discount, perspective master student discount, social discount), including in the amount of 100%;
- b) student dropout trends;
- c) student academic leave.

The calculations have been made according to the accrual method, which is to be assessed positively. In this way it is possible to ensure the sustainability of the study direction and its programmes. However, a significant risk to financial stability is posed by the fact that the source of

funding is only tuition fees. Especially considering that the number of dropout students is significant (see program statistics) and only a part of the enrolled students complete their studies. Therefore, RSU has to differentiate the study direction and programme budgeted with other financial sources, for example, by implementing research projects in the field of law, creating paid lifelong learning trainings (seminars).

A system for funding research has been defined and implemented. There is a motivation system for lecturers to publish scientific works. Each year, teachers earn points according to which prizes are awarded. Such a procedure is to be assessed positively, because according to the amount of work done and achievements, RSU pays a bonus. However, this system is post factum - prizes are awarded for scientific work that has already been published. Experts also suggest setting up a research fund to provide grants for various research projects to lecturers at the Faculty of Law - namely, to provide funding for research at an early stage, encouraging the development of various project ideas. Such financial support would encourage teachers to be more active in research, including collaboration with employers and other professional organizations.

Currently, RSU Faculty of Law uses the RSU infrastructure at Dzirciema Street 16, Anniņmuižas Street 26a in Riga for administrative and academic purposes and other RSU premises as needed. The facilities for both administrative needs and academic activities are well-equipped technically for both day-to-day administrative work and academic activities.

Infrastructure and material and technical support for RSU Faculty of Law is sufficient. The necessary infrastructure resources and the material and technical provision are available for the RSU. The fact that RSU is also thinking about the development of the infrastructure and material and technical provision of the Faculty of Law is positive. Work has begun on the reconstruction of the building in Riga, Kuldīgas Street 9a, where in the future the entire RSU Faculty of Law will be relocated.

The facilities available to students and faculty are available at a sufficient level. RSU is able to provide this, because as a large university in Latvia it is able to provide facilities and other facilities for several faculties - for example, libraries and reading rooms, video lecture recording studios, canteen, lounges, and auditoriums.

RSU students and academic staff are already provided with a well-developed IT infrastructure and virtual study environment. RSU students and academic staff have access to e-studies environment with study materials and student assessments, a Student portal containing the necessary study information and e-services, an Academic Staff portal containing information on academic staff, academic structural units, register of study courses and study programmes, survey system, and feedback.

The Faculty of Law has special facilities, such as a courtroom and a forensic training room.

The library has the necessary legal literature, as well as several necessary databases. It is positive that the Library's Open Access subscription is available to RSU students and staff 24/7, but the library's own working hours are suitable for students' needs. Several computers are provided in the reading room.

The number and area of the premises are suitable for permanent study and research work. The availability of the library is sufficient. The services offered by the library are also sufficient. There is a clear and definite procedure for purchasing the latest books. There is a budget for the purchase of new books each year. Funding for the purchase of resources is growing rapidly year by year. Students have access to 25 online databases. Overall, the statistics on the use of databases are good.

Thus, the system created in general provides adequate methodological and informative support. At the same time, two important issues emerged from expert interviews with students and graduates:

- a) The number of available books' exponents in the RSU library is not sufficient. Students and graduates indicated that it should be higher;
- b) Outside the library, the availability of data in the RSU digital environment should be wider.

Students and graduates indicated that, for example, the study papers of previous years should be available on the Internet outside the library.

Consequently, RSU must increase the number of copies of purchased books, at least those that are in Latvian. The availability of digital resources outside the library must also be increased. Such remote access is particularly important during a COVID pandemic.

RSU has defined, implemented and observed procedures (for the study direction and the corresponding study programmes) for attracting qualified teaching staff. The elected teachers are selected in accordance with the procedures specified in Latvian laws. Competitions for academic and scientific positions, as well as for general staff positions are announced openly - on the RSU website, on the portal "Latvijas Vēstnesis", on specialized job advertisement portals (CV-online, etc.), etc. The established procedure ensures the appropriate selection of the teaching staff in accordance with the capabilities and needs of RSU.

The academic and research workload of the teaching staff is balanced. Full-time lecturers are required to participate in research activities that are regulated by staff job descriptions. Depending on the type of academic position, the following proportion of duties and responsibilities of the employee in scientific and research activities has been determined:

- a) assistants carry out scientific and research work 30% of the working time;
- b) lecturers carry out scientific and research work 15% of the working time;
- c) assistant professors, associate professors, professors carry out scientific and research work 20% of the working time.

The division of responsibilities within a structural unit may be changed by the head of the structural unit in agreement with the employee, according to the planning of the pedagogical work and the projects to be implemented.

The scientific results of the academic staff are summarised once a year and included in the scientific activity report. For some groups of staff, they are related to the principles of remuneration and motivation. Lecturer achievements are included in their CV.

The needs of professional and didactic development of the teaching staff are purposefully determined, appropriate improvement measures are used, the result and efficiency of the implemented measures are evaluated.

RSU Centre for Educational Growth (hereinafter referred to as the Centre) was created in 2014 for the improvement of the quality of studies and competence of university lecturers. Within the scope of its operations, the Centre provides support in the improvement of the quality of studies by analysing the study process and organising pedagogical growth of academic staff in continuing education activities according to current needs. Representatives of the Faculty of Law (lecturers, support and administrative staff) were one of the most active participants in the fall semester of 2019. In total, 54 colleagues from the Faculty of Law participated in the continuing education activities for lecturers during the autumn semester of 2019, attending 12 different educational activities.

In order to strengthen the professional skills of the young lecturers in the classroom and to promote their career development, the School of Junior Academics (SJA) was established at RSU in 2019. Intensive participation of 2 lecturers of the Faculty of Law at RSU School of Junior Academics is to be considered a valuable resource for ensuring quality and improvement of the study process.

Teaching staff participates in both outgoing and incoming mobility, which provides added value for the implementation of the study process and the quality of studies. However, their activity is insufficient. For example, in the last six years, ten lecturers have gone from the Faculty of Law to guest teaching under the Erasmus + program, although the total number of lecturers is 110. During the last six years, the Faculty of Law has hosted 12 guest lecturers under the Erasmus program. This indicator is also considered insufficient.

RSU has identified the necessary support for students and, based on the needs of students, a functioning support system has been established. Guidelines and support policies have been developed for supporting RSU students with special needs.

RSU operates a Career Center. The Career Center is an active support for career development in Latvia Association. Career center services are available to all RSU students, prospective students, as well as employees.

An RSU student with special needs is an RSU student with functional limitations who it is necessary to adjust the study environment and process in order to create equal opportunities to obtain higher education education.

Since 2012, all RSU students can receive psycho-emotional support. This service was introduced with the aim to help students overcome adaptation problems when starting studies, reduce emotional manifestations of stress, health disorders caused by stress, psychosomatic disorders or illnesses, overcoming relationship difficulties, crisis situations.

Although the platform for the distance studies has been established and is theoretically functional, quite few of the courses have an elaborate content in order to be used instantly in the study process. The representatives of the university pointed that it will take more than one year to completely tailor the contents of the study courses for distance learning.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

RSU has developed a system to determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study direction and the relevant study programmes. RSU has developed a system to determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study direction and the relevant study programmes. The facilities available to students and faculty are available at a sufficient level. RSU has identified the necessary support for students and teachers, based on the needs of them, a functioning support system has been established. The platform for the distance studies has been established and is theoretically functional, however, quite few of the courses have an elaborate content in order to be used instantly in the study process.

### **Strengths:**

- The financial amount for the study direction and programmes is considerable and RSU have a budgeted planning system.
- Infrastructure development activities are carried out to improve it.
- RSU have a rewarding motivation system for scientific activity.
- Study IT systems are good and supportive for students and teachers.
- RSU has identified the necessary support for students and teachers, based on the needs of them, a functioning support system has been established.

### **Weaknesses:**

- The source for the study direction and programmes is only tuition fees, there is no diversity in budget sources.
- The motivation system for lecturers to publish scientific works is post factum, there is no research fund to provide grants for research projects.
- The number of available books exponents in the RSU library is not sufficient and availability of data in the RSU digital environment should be wider.
- Teaching staff outgoing mobility is insufficient.

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

### **Analysis**



The University has adopted an overall approach of internationally competitive education, excellent research and technological advancements to enhance the innovative powers of the institution (see Development Strategy for 2015 - 2020). The study direction of law exploits as far as high-level research is concerned from the synergy effects with health care, medicine and related subjects which form the research core of the university. Research in law fields is also promoted by annual conferences on different subjects of law (e.g. cyber law, sports law and others), which are organised by the Faculty of Law together with international partner institutions. Six lecturers of the study direction 'Law' can be found in the Latvian Council of Science. The legal scientific journal 'Socrates', indexed in the Copernicus database and included in ERIH PLUS database, provides for possibilities to publish ones' research and participate in a dialogue with the international community of researchers.

Scientific activities are monitored and assessed on a regular basis as well as externally and internally funded, thus forming a strong incentive to participate and enhance the basic salary. These measures correspond with the already implemented scheme of remunerative incentives triggered by respective research activities. Scientific research is also promoted by offering paid leave for the attendance of scientific conferences.

The existing social sciences platform gives the opportunity to immerse into diverse research activities. These are supported by research-oriented courses and trainings on a doctoral and post doctoral level. Doctoral studies are encouraged to undertake individual doctoral research papers by the availability of resources and grants.

Strong research activities are also found in the fields of criminal law on a national and international basis, mainly being shouldered by elected staff and doctoral students. Guest lecturers who would have to cope with strenuous daily jobs and do not strive to follow an academic career are considerably and understandably less involved in scientific research.

Research findings are spread by the means of the social sciences platform, research outcomes shared and discussed on a regular basis. Students are encouraged to work research oriented in course papers and thesis papers. Students are encouraged towards scientific research by co-organizing conferences, scientific weeks, mock trials, participation in the Legal Clinic Programme etc. In terms of applied innovations, the Study Direction Law has applied tools to be able to analyse the programme contents and apply alterations, modifications and developments to adapt to new trends and needs. To be mentioned is the new type of study programme mapping since 2017-2018 at RSU, by allowing to analyse the programme content and its results, used to first assess the quality of the study programme, as well as the improvement of the study programme. A mapping information system specification was developed in 2019. The Social Sciences Platform, SSP, is conducting and interlinking major researches across faculty boundaries, promoting cross-country research initiatives, creating research networks and placing research results in high profile publications, thus creating better recognition of RSU research. SSP enables practical industry researches, a unique feature among the academic research environment. Research materials are placed in SSP for ready use by interested researchers.

Another innovative tool is BITF (Boris and Inara Teterev Foundation), initiating scholarships to further qualify teaching staff in means to upgrade study programme, develop and qualify in e-solutions of teaching or developing study materials (e.g. audiovisual materials). Out of that initiative followed an upgrade of study programmes (e.g. broadening and modernizing elective courses) and the development of an IT based e learning environment.

Altogether, doctoral students and academic staff - in their different capacities - can dedicate a satisfactory time slot towards scientific research.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The study direction complies with the prescribed requirements and thus is fully compliant. Only

minor deficiencies can be identified (good).

#### Strengths:

- Overall scientific research - especially in the fields of health care, medicine, criminal law, law enforcement as the two main pillars of research nationally and internationally - is well advanced and encouraged by remuneration factors, the whole research environment (including the IT infrastructure), the overall time, one can dedicate towards scientific research and a whole set of activities (conferences, cross border projects, dissemination and discussion of research results).
- The online research magazine 'Socrates' is helpful in ensuring that research is published and getting attention from the research community.
- The advanced e-Solution environment enhances with its different features the innovative approach in the study and research process.
- The implemented incentives and remuneration schemes to enhance research activities
- The generally good research environment (access to databases, the modern IT-Environment and IT support)
- Training and coaching of academic staff in different fields (e.g. Soft Skills, teaching through E-Learning facilities, improvement of language skills etc.)

#### Weaknesses:

- Guest lecturers of non-academic background are not ideally included in research activities of the Faculty

## 5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

### Analysis

One of the main objectives of the study direction 'Law' is the employability and fitness for the labor market of its graduates from the different study programmes.

RSU has formed an intensive network of cooperations with legal practitioners, legal and industrial associations, municipalities, administrative bodies, courts and the like.

A wide range of employers is catering for internships and trainees. Employers of different background - from legal offices to the different administrative levels of the police forces as well as the State Police College - are involved in teaching activities at the faculty of law. They also act in different defense commission of Bachelor's and Master's thesis' and are regularly heard in discussions on strategic development topics (e.g. when a new development plan is set up).

All the mentioned stakeholders are in close and long-standing relationship with the faculty, also providing for due placement of students, who have to absolve an obligatory internship/Traineeship during their studies. The placements familiarise students with practical legal work in different fields, provides for inside knowledge and practical skills. Foremost, the cooperation with State Police, the Prosecutor's Office, BDO LAW and other entities helps to link theory with practice. In SAR Annexes 9.1 and 9.2 (students' placement regulations and information on contracts and other information on internship placement procedures) give a full picture of the practical legal skills acquired in partner employers' offices and their integration into the syllabus of the different law studies.

When it comes to internationalisation, RSU has rich experiences, partnerships, projects and cooperations. There are some rather sparse internationalisation efforts concerning the faculty of law as such. In 2016, the faculty became a member of the European Law Faculties Association, ELFA. Some regular Erasmus+ mobilities for teaching and studying have been established. The ratio of incoming foreign students is low. Besides joint conferences and a trickle of exchange internationally, the international endeavours for the Law Field are rather dormant.

Internationalisation is one of the core principles of RSU and also the Study Direction Law. Internationalisation leads to cross-border cooperations, international research, double degree

programmes, language literacy and an overall cross border academic mobility which is strongly advertised and promoted by the European Commission and the member States, Latvia included. Through the means of Erasmus+ and several other features an international academic network is woven, enabling academics to see across the national level and infuse knowledge by means of a close knit international academic community. This leads to modified and modernized courses, a flurry of publications and research and employability for graduates everywhere in Europe. These are just a few reasons why internationalisation is beneficial for course design, studies, mobility and employability. There are also only very few joint research projects and no double diploma studies.

The Study Direction Law is currently not availing of all those possibilities, given the low level of internationalisation in the Law Field as opposed to other Study Fields within RSU (eg medicine, health care, political sciences etc.).

In the accreditation application, RSU has added under “study programmes” study programme forms for both full-time and part-time studies offered in English as well, which makes the panel assume that RSU applies for accreditation of English-taught programmes as well. However, there is no specific description of such programme so far, and all data contained under “study type and form” are copied from the Latvian-taught programmes (for instance, also for the English-taught full-time programme a “CE certificate in the Latvian language” is mentioned as admission requirement). In other words, the only element pointing at the existence of English-taught programmes is the label “English” on the programme form description in the platform’s study programme folder. RSU Faculty of law does also not market any English-taught programmes so far; its homepage clarifies on its entrance interface that “This faculty offers programmes only in Latvian”.

There is for the time being no clear analysis/market search being done on the actual demand for courses or whole programmes to be taught in English, by whom from a capacity point of view and in which time frame. Especially it has to be taken into account that English as an academic working language among staff and students is not fully developed so far.

Existing cooperations with employers, the State Police College, courts etc. strongly contribute to the practice-oriented learning outcomes of the study programmes. Specific features and strong points of the study programmes, such as criminology and criminal procedure law are taken up in the existing cooperations, both in practice (police forces) and the academic field (cooperation with Police Academy of Nienberg in forensics and cyber crime or the trilateral cooperation agreement with BA School of Business and Finance and the Riga Technical University around the topic of cybersecurity). RSU boasts in the fields of healthcare, medicine and social sciences, such as political sciences, many cooperations and projects, whereas there are no international students in the study direction law (5.2 self-assessment Report). Erasmus + students have the opportunity, as there are not enough topics in law taught in English to avail of courses at other faculties of the Social Sciences. (5.2 self-assessment Report).

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

While the cooperation with industry, administration, academic players and legal practitioners inside Latvia is excellent and exemplary, the internationalisation features of the study direction 'Law' are only 'Average' and make the requirement 'Partially Compliant'.

Strengths:

- Laudable is the effort to from time to time invite foreign lecturers to hold lectures in interesting fields and thus give the studies an international perspective.
- Strong and intensive as well as long lasting cooperative networks with courts, administrations, municipalities and practitioners, mainly within Latvia, some outside Latvia.
- Main stakeholders outside the academic sector are well involved with activities and development of

RSU and the faculty of law.

Weaknesses:

- Especially the staff and student mobility is much to be desired (e.g. Erasmus+ activities). In such bilateral exchange programmes besides studying and teaching, there is normally found joint research projects, and/or double diploma studies. None of that happened so far in the field of legal studies. One reason could be that most Latvian students are fully employed and not able to disrupt their working life. Incoming students might not be attracted with Latvian law, offered in Latvian language. They usually recur to English held lectures in other Social Sciences fields.
- Decisive steps should be taken within staff and students to ensure that English as the academic working language gets more attention and the language skills are enhanced.
- It is advisable to thoroughly verify the demand whether to teach courses or whole programmes in English, by whom from a capacity point of view and in which time frame.
- There is no consistent system or mechanism to attract students and teaching staff from abroad.
- So far not many joint research projects and no double diploma studies.
- English as an academic working language among staff and students is not fully developed.
- No consistent concept on whether courses or full programmes could and should be taught in English, in which time frame and according to which demand.

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

### **Analysis**

The previous accreditation conducted in 2013 has been summarized in 13 recommendations (annex 11) made by the accreditation panel towards RSU Faculty of law:

- no. 1: "Academic staff and students participate in scientific conferences and/or creative activities, but there should be more international research papers" - the target ("extensive involvement in international research projects") has only partly been achieved; RSU staff is research-wise slightly more involved internationally than in 2013, but the increase has not been considerable.
- no. 2: "More literature on pedagogical matters" - the target has been achieved, at least as far as the on-site visit in the library could provide evidence to experts on this.
- no. 3: "Lack of online e-courses" - goal has for the time being not been achieved yet; the prototype digital infrastructure is well-developed und theoretically fully functionable, but has - for reasons not entirely clear to the panel - no chance for being implemented before the academic year 2021/2022. The faculty seemed to have managed fairly well with the lockdown this year by transposing lectures successfully to Zoom, Moodle and other standard platforms, but these cannot be considered yet as autonomous, bespoke and systematized e-courses within a coherent digital teaching infrastructure.
- no. 4: "International cooperation could be more extensive and more active" - goal has not been achieved yet; the recommendation in this year's accreditation remains in this point literally the same.
- no. 5: "More specialised courses in English should be organised and English language skills should be developed more" - goal not/hardly achieved; there is at present no course taught in English, and while English is offered as a subject in the curriculum, there is no evidence for any effects of it seen by student's research/travel/exchange activities.
- no. 6: "Continue to develop study programmes in line with international trends" - goal partly achieved; study programmes have been reformed since 2013, and there is also some impact on this by international trends, more specifically by offering the new courses "New technologies on the solving and prevention of crime", "Electronic commerce and taxes", "Enforcement and Protection of Human Rights in the Digital Environment" and "Intellectual Property Rights in Digital Environment". However, these cover but some of the legal impacts of digitalisation/AI on various fields of law,

GDPR or cybersecurity issues, which should further be implemented as well.

- no. 7: "to develop study programmes jointly with employers" - goal achieved; on 9 July 2017, RSU licensed the professional bachelor study program "Police Work", which is included in the study direction Internal Security and Civil Protection.
- no. 8: "to develop joint study programmes with other higher education institutions" - goal not achieved yet; preparations for that may be ongoing, but no evidence for it identified.
- no. 9: "invite more visiting lecturers, in particular foreign experts and foreign university lecturers" - goal partly achieved; there is a number of visiting foreign experts/lecturers coming to RSU every year on a free/personal basis, but very little use is made of Erasmus+ and other supporting structures for this.
- no. 10: "invest in improving the qualifications of academic staff, and to encourage them to participate more in foreign exchange programmes or international projects" - goal partly achieved; while academic staff is schooled/offered training for self-improvement, encouragement to engage themselves internationally could have been so far more successful.
- no. 11: "provide more information and encourage students to participate more actively in international exchange programmes" - goal not achieved; the number of outgoing students remains very low until this day.
- no 12: "develop online courses" - goal only partly achieved (see point 3 above).
- no 13: "Develop a detailed action plan on how to attract international students to study programmes" - goal not achieved; the number of incoming students is negligible til this day, and there is at present no detailed action plan worked out how to change this.

## Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

Most of the recommendations have only partly been implemented, some – recommendations no. 4, 8, 11 and 13 – have not been implemented yet. Fully implemented has only been recommendation no. 2 (equipping the library better with sources on didactics and pedagogy).

Taking into the overall focus of the previous committee, especially the implementation of points 1, 11 and 13 would have been highly appreciated by the previous assessment.

### Strengths:

- RSU faculty of law has (very probably) increased access to pedagogical literature since the last assessment. It has also implemented recommendation no. 7 by licensing the professional bachelor study program "Police Work" (within in the study direction Internal Security and Civil Protection) on 9 July 2017.

### Weaknesses:

- The number of recommendations not being implemented is rather high, and its implementation should become a priority. The lack of internationalisations on various levels (see details above) has a negative impact to study field and relevant study programmes all together.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The self assessment report provides enough information to fully support compliance with this criterion.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The self assessment report provides enough information to fully support compliance with this criterion.

- 3 1.2. A mechanism for the development and internal approval of the study programmes of the higher education institution/ college, as well as the supervision of their performance and periodic inspection thereof has been developed.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The self assessment report provides enough information to fully support compliance with this criterion.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The self assessment report provides enough information to fully support compliance with this criterion.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The self assessment report provides enough information to fully support compliance with this criterion.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The self assessment report provides enough information to fully support compliance with this criterion.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The self assessment report provides enough information to fully support compliance with this criterion.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** RSU cooperates with various national organisations, e.g. state police, and on international level (ELFA), ensuring these aims, but international cooperation could still be improved; however, these shortcomings do not make RSU yet partially compliant only.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The information provided in the self assessment report supports that the level of scientific research is compliant.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** Only some of the recommendations of the previous assessment have been fully implemented (see I. 6).

## 8. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

RSU must draft the plan how to diversify the budget sources.
Even though a letter certifying general B2 English proficiency, English language proficiency should be considerably improved among both staff and students
Rethink endeavour of providing entire programmes also in English in terms of demand and resources
The existing excellent prototype software/platform for distance learning must be fully functional for all study courses until September 2021.

### Long-term recommendations

RSU must attract other sources of finance in addition to the tuition fee, for instance creating research projects with professional organizations in the field of law, participating in public research competitions.
Guest lecturers with different professional backgrounds should possibly be more included in scientific research, representing their different fields of expertise in conferences, discussions, papers and such, thus making scientific research at the faculty of law stronger, more diverse and more public.
The faculty is encouraged to find means to further strengthen research activities in the sectors of law that are taught but are as of yet not strongly represented in research, such as the civil and business law fields, European law and international law. It should be thought about how to further integrate students in research activities and enhance their interest and participation. Grants and projects, being set up by the EU could be applied for in greater number (with or without partner institutions in and outside Latvia).
It is strongly recommended to strengthen the approach to internationalisation and fall in step with the internationally renowned studies of RSU in the fields of medicine and health care. Partnership agreements could be filled with life. European research grants could be applied for successfully with international partners. Study Programmes (Academic Master and Doctoral studies for example) could - with the respective curricular amendments - be made attractive for incoming students.
The need for English as an academic working language could be stressed and implemented more diligently both in the student realm as well as the academic staff environment. An action plan on internationalisation seems to be of the essence. The splendid IT- and Distance Learning infrastructure could be another key factor in driving internationalisation efforts.
Increase the availability of books in the library in the field of law and increase availability of data in the RSU digital environment.
Develop motivation rules and ensure more active mobility of teachers in the ERASMUS program.

It is recommended to strengthen research activities in some fields of European and International Law, such as Data Protection, Insolvency Law, aspects of Consumer Law, International Trade Law etc.

RSU should further integrate students in research activities.

RSU should endeavour to avail grants and projects being set up by numerous EU-Bodies.

## **II. "Law Science" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "Law Science" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

The academic bachelor study programme "Law Science" (43380) indicators both in full and part time study form is coherent and well prepared; the degree awarded is "Bachelor's degree of social sciences in law science" (120 Latvian CP).

In the accreditation application, RSU has added under "study programmes" study programme forms for both full-time and part time studies offered in English as well, which makes the panel assume that RSU applies for accreditation of English-taught programmes as well. However, there is no specific description of such programme so far, and all data contained under "study type and form" are copied from the Latvian-taught programmes (for instance, also for the English-taught full-time programme a "CE certificate in the Latvian language" is mentioned as admission requirement). In other words, the only element pointing at the existence of English-taught programmes is the label "English" on the programme form description in the platform's study programme folder. RSU Faculty of law does also not market any English-taught programmes so far; its homepage clarifies on its entrance interface that "This faculty offers programmes only in Latvian".

During the last months a distance learning infrastructure has been built which will allow remote digitalized studies. The faculty feels that there is a need for these remote studies with regular contact phases being managed via ZOOM. Latvian expatriates and students from distant Latvian provinces could benefit from this approach. The distance learning e-environment has been designed. However, the descriptions of the study courses need to be provided and the whole operations will only be functional earliest in winter term 2021 or later. This leaves the current concept of distance learning to be verified in terms of detailed contents, client demand and stable functioning.

Aim of the Latvian-taught study programme is to prepare specialists in field of law taking into account local context and tradition. Graduates are expected to have sufficient skills in order to select, analyse and interpret legal framework and take necessary actions in legal procedures. Studies are set up in such way that it prepares students and gives required skills for possible continuation of studies in possible Master's level program so that professional qualification can be obtained.

Admission requirements are reasonable and developed taking into account the overall aims and objectives of studies, however, admission requirements for study programme implemented in English should be reviewed. Study program aims, objectives and learning outcomes are interrelated and well structured so that students are sufficiently prepared for in-depth academic work in field given the overall requirements of research and competence capabilities of academic Bachelors' degree in accordance with Bologna Declaration guidelines and local legislature.

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



Aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements of the programme are well interrelated, however, for the English-taught programme a “CE certificate in the Latvian language” is mentioned as admission requirement, it would be necessary to reconsider whether the admission requirements for the study programme in English are appropriate. Latvian expatriates and students from distant Latvian provinces could benefit from distance learning programme, however, the precise study parameters for this form should be indicated. The Course fully complies with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The contents in itself follows logic and builds upon each other.

**Strengths:**

The design of study courses/modules, the traineeship and the final thesis guarantee a considerable quality of the study programme.

**Weaknesses:**

- The parameters of the study programme (for example, admission requirements) have not been specifically revised for both the study programme to be implemented in English as well as for distance learning.

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

### **Analysis**

The entire programme has been well established and enjoys broad resonance among students. Courses are added according to new developments in the labor market. The learning environment is changed towards more e Learning. Elective courses on topical issues, such as digitalization, are added on a regular basis. Moot Courts, practical training phases and teaching by experienced practitioners stand for a modern and up to date approach towards learning outcomes, thus ensuring employability of graduates.

The descriptions of the study courses/ modules are clear, complete and meet the relevant regulations. Traineeships and internships are organized together with external partners. The final thesis is arranged and supervised in a way that guarantees for a high-quality outcome.

The intended learning outcomes to produce a graduate with a first academic degree who is fit for any task in the legal field, needing general knowledge in the basic fields of law and a good grasp of legal methodology, twinned with a deepened insight in special fields, as 'Medical Law', 'Social Law' or 'Forensic Science'.

Other typical topics of Bachelor Study Programmes in Law, such as different parts of International Private Law or Business Law fields, are not equally represented. A better course balance might be of the essence. This is especially true taking into account that on a step by step approach the Bachelor Programme is desired to be taught in English also. This would mean to cater for different needs and demands and to rethink the make-up and balance of the coursework.

The study process is implemented foremost through interactive lectures, practical dialogue oriented seminars and independent work by students. The evaluation of study progress happens in direct discussion phases during contact hours (e.g. feedback questions) and tests of different kinds at the end of semester.

Students are invited to evaluate their studies via survey in the RSU e-environment. Evaluation outcomes are taken into account when courses are updated.

All in all the education is student-centred, and it is understood that students are clients and main stakeholders. This is true for the student-oriented composition of the learning outcomes of the study programme also. This student-centred approach has made studies less theory based and more practically oriented and lively.

In terms of distance teaching, RSU has forwarded the concept for the implementation of Distance Learning, developed by the Centre for Educational Growth. RSU endeavors to implement remote studies in a step by step approach, starting with the initiation of a fully functional technological base for the implementation of distance learning (E-studies portal, video platform etc.). Study course topics, study materials and the whole communication infrastructure between lecturers and students are currently under way to be implemented (see the concept paper 'Introduction of Distance Learning at RSU'), starting with an offer for remote studies first towards already enrolled students as an alternative to full time or part time studies.

In further steps, the remote studies offer is intended to be extended toward other clientel, such as practitioners who want to avail from further education opportunities from home and at their own time.

Regular feedback with all relevant stakeholders, including employers and graduate (Alumni) surveys, is a core principle of the RSU Development Strategy 2017 - 2021. The participation of external partners and the impact of their feedback plays a major role in RSU decision making bodies, such as RSU Convent of Councillors, Alumni Association, and Study Quality Councils (SOC).

Newly designed or amended courses according to new developments in the labor market: e.g. courses and seminars on cybercrime with a labor market need for specialists in this emerging topic.

Elected staff, visiting lecturers and students will get opportunities to adapt and try out the new study environment. Constant IT- support is available.

Student mobility (incoming and outgoing) is constant but rather weak. In the academic years 2013/2014 - 2018/2019 there were 15 outgoing student mobilities in the Bachelor programme and three in the Master's study programme 'Law'. In the same period, incomings were eight in the Bachelor programme and one in the Master's programme (self-assessment report Annex 8.1, 8.2). Teaching courses in English could help to fire up internationalisation and make incoming and outgoing activities more attractive.

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

The Bachelor full time and part-time studies in Latvian are fully compliant with the prescribed requirements, however, composition of course is should be more balanced, for example, including more different parts of International Private Law or Business Law fields. The distance learning concept and the distance learning e-courses composition are generally coherent and even exemplary in its prototype.

### **Strengths:**

- The courses, teaching and teaching environment are satisfactory and well adapted by the students, meeting their needs.

- There is a high number of invited lecturers from professional bodies, administrations and the police force, not leading to high fluctuation rates and instabilities in the teaching process but rather enriching the highly theoretical topics with practical knowledge and first-hand experience from highly qualified professionals.

### **Weaknesses:**

- The Faculty could think about balancing the course work a bit more towards European and international legal topics, given that the faculty advertises that European and International Law is at the centre of interest.

- The curriculum strongly leans on the course pillars criminology and health care. Other important subjects, such as the national, European and international features of Business Law (Trade Law, Company Law, Insolvency Law, International Private Law etc.) are not equally present.

- Internationalisation (mobilities, joint projects and joint research) is not at a high level.
- Demand, teaching capacities and course design for an English taught programme is not plausible.
- Cross-border projects, research and activities through groups like Elsa and ILSA should lead to more involvement in international activities, given that a good number of active partnership agreements exist.
- A point of concern are the English taught Bachelor programmes. Demand, capable teaching staff and course design should be rethought and possibly adapted. This is strongly recommended.

Overall the evaluation is 'good'.

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

#### **Analysis**

The financial resources of the study programme are based on the revenues from tuition fees paid by the students themselves or their employers.

RSU has the necessary infrastructure and material and technical support for the implementation of the study programme. Students have access to auditoriums that are equipped not only with the tables and chairs needed for study needs, but also with multimedia equipment and stationary presentation equipment. All university staff, i.e. academic, general and students, can use both the study rooms and the computer class, as well as the library. The Faculty of Law has special facilities, such as a courtroom and a forensic training room. The university also provides an internet connection, as well as access to internal information systems, where study materials are available, as well as internal normative documents and databases.

The library has the necessary legal literature, as well as several necessary databases. It is positive that the Library's Open Access subscription is available to RSU students and staff 24/7, but also the library's own working hours are suitable for students' needs. At the same time, two important issues emerged from expert interviews with students and graduates: a) the number of available books exponents in the RSU library is not sufficient. Students and graduates indicated that it should be higher, as well as the number of books in foreign languages does not satisfy the study's needs; outside the library, the availability of data in the RSU digital environment should be wider. If the study programme will be implemented in English, it would be necessary to supplement the range of available literature in English.

RSU knows the needs of the students and has a well-functioning support system responding to the need; the distance learning e-environment has been designed. However, the descriptions of the study courses need to be provided and the whole operations will only be functional earliest in winter term 2021 or later. This leaves the current concept of distance learning to be verified in terms of detailed contents, client demand and stable functioning.

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

In general, it can be concluded that RSU has the necessary infrastructure and material and technical support for the implementation of the study programme, however, the range of literature available in English should be increased.

Strengths:

- Infrastructure is constantly developed and meets the needs of the students and teachers
- In general, the study IT systems are good and supportive for students and teachers
- The students' support system is based on the needs of the students and is functioning well

Weaknesses:

- There is no diversity in budgetary incomes, which, given the unstable numbers of the students, may impede the development of the study programme.
- The number of available books in the field of law in RSU library is not sufficient as well as availability of the books in English, German and/or French should be wider.
- At the moment unclear evidence on distance learning system and RSU teachers' ability to fully provide it.

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

##### **Analysis**

Teaching staff (11 elected, 62 invited) is hired according to identified needs in the running study programmes. Staff shall fulfill a number of criteria, ranging from scientific qualifications, professional knowledge and experience to teaching abilities. Guest lecturers from different fields, complementing the taught subjects, are mostly highly qualified field professionals, strengthening staff in strategic specialisation areas. Elected staff holds a strong research focus. The Centre for Educational Growth at RSU allows all lecturers to be acquainted with new teaching and research methods, language training and diverse options of coaching. All measures are used to enhance student-centred education.

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory enactment. As there are: appropriate higher education, lecturer experience, most lecturers being highly qualified professionals in their respective fields, labor market-oriented teaching, cooperation with students and heeding students' needs. Some lectures can be provided in English. All lecturers are willing to be further qualified.

The Management of the Study Direction Law has provided the panel with the information that ten English proficiency level of the teaching staff currently is at least B2.

Staff is eagerly involved in scientific research, conferences, publications, both Latvian and abroad (also in peer reviewed journals. The list of current publications can be found in Annexes 6.4 and 6.5). There is mutual cooperation of teaching staff on current topics, highlighting the interrelation between study courses. Interdisciplinary teaching and research approaches are enacted.

Teaching staff participates in both outgoing and incoming mobility. However, mobility management system is insufficiently developed. In the last six years, ten lecturers have gone from the Faculty of Law to guest teaching under the Erasmus + program, although the total number of lecturers is 110. During the last six years, the Faculty of Law has hosted 12 guest lecturers under the Erasmus program. This indicator is also considered insufficient.

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

Regarding teaching staff, the study programme fully complies with the prescribed requirements.

##### **Strengths:**

- The panel is satisfied that the high number of guest lecturers does not disturb the consistency in the teaching process. On the other hand, it adds practical knowledge to scientific standards and makes the study less theoretical and more market oriented.
- The staff is approachable and student oriented.

##### **Weaknesses:**

- There is a low percentage of elected staff (ratio elected-invited: 1 to 5,6).
- Scientific publications and cross border projects should be a focus point of further development.
- The demand and design of the study programme to be offered wholly in English should be

rethought.

- Academic staff should have a higher research impact in peer reviewed publications with citations in other renowned publications as well as citations in court rulings as expert scholars.
- Teaching staff outgoing mobility is insufficient, there is no clear plan for its improvement.

Altogether the evaluation is "good"

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Law Science"

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Sample of attached diploma (Annex 24) is compliant with MK. Nr. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus"

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 24.2 confirms that RSU has agreement in place with University of Latvia to provide students with options to continue education.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 24.3 confirms that institution guarantees compensation for losses if necessary.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 6.1 - confirms that state language proficiency is compliant with MK. Nr. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi"

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Respective letter 02.12.2019 Nr.60-6/319/20 confirming an English proficiency of B2 of the staff is provided

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:** N/A

- 7 7. The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 24.7 confirms that academic staff complies with set requirements. Out of fourteen representatives of the academic staff there are 3 professors and 3 associate professors.
- 8 8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Sample of attached study agreement (annex 24.8) complies with MK. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi"
- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Study courses and materials are prepared in accordance with requirements.
- 10 10. The study programme complies with the valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided that the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant  
**Justification:** N/A
- 11 11. Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 24.9 confirms that Council for Higher Education has provided opinion and supports implementation of said academic Bachelor's study programme.
- 12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 17.1 confirms that study programme complies with State Education Standard.
- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).  
**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant  
**Justification:** N/A
- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Attached resumes of staff confirms that each member of academic staff fulfills criteria regarding publications in accordance with legislature.

## 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** All requirements by national regulations were assessed as fully compliant; the overall assessment is thus fully compliant.

## Requirements (R6-R8)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provisions comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Qualifications of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants are assumed to comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Altogether, the study programme complies with the national requirements as well as with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes. However, admission requirements for English taught programme should be reconsidered, study programme parameters for distance study programme should be indicated and tailor made course descriptions should be prepared, taking into account specificity of this form.

Strength:

At some points the performance of RSU exceeds the required standards, e.g. the number of qualified teaching staff.

Weaknesses:

- Even though letter from 02.12.2019 Nr.60-6/319/20 confirming an English proficiency of B2 of the staff is provided, English language proficiency is - as demonstrated during the panel's visit to RSU - not well developed
- Course descriptions are not tailor-made for distance study.

## Evaluation of the study programme "Law Science"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## 6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Law Science"

### Short-term recommendations

Even though letter from 02.12.2019 Nr.60-6/319/20 confirming an English proficiency of B2 of the staff is provided, English language proficiency should be considerably improved among both staff and students

Course descriptions have to be adapted for distance study.

Study programme parameters for distance learning should be indicated.

The demand and design of the study programme to be offered wholly in English should be rethought. Demand, capable teaching staff and course design should be rethought and possibly adapted.

Admission requirements for English taught programme should be revised.

### Long-term recommendations

Courses in both versions of implementation could be adapted/augmented into coherent units covering all core issues of the respective field, which would allow the student to obtain not only a Bachelor in law, but additionally a certified specialisation in the respective specialisation, which would provide a clear framework for the so far only loosely connected electives on some (but not all) essential issues in health/medical law and criminal/criminal procedure law and would thus form a clear advantage on the job market – just as well as demonstrating RSU Faculty of Law's expertise in these two specialisations.

The percentage of elected staff (ratio elected-invited: 1 to 5,6) should be increased.

Scientific publications and cross border projects should be a focus point of further development.

Academic staff should have a higher research impact in peer reviewed publications with citations in other renowned publications as well as citations in court rulings as expert scholars.

A clear strategy for improving teaching staff outgoing mobility should be established.

RSU should find a way how to diversify the incomes for the study programme.

## II. "Law Science" ASSESSMENT

### II. "Law Science" ASSESSMENT

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

The academic master study programme "Law Science" (45380 ) indicators both in full and part time study form is coherent and well prepared ; the degree awarded is "Master of Social Sciences in Law" (60 CP full time studies - 1 year 6 months and part-time -2 years, 80 CP full time studies - 2 years and part-time -2 years 6 months), the scope (60 or 80 CP) depends on the admission requirements. Implemented in Latvian.

For all durations, the aim of the study programme is to prepare specialists with in-depth theoretical



knowledge of law who can analyse and solve issues of legal nature in local and international contexts, as set forth in 7th level of the Latvian Qualification Framework. Admission requirements are reasonable and developed taking into account the overall aims and objectives of studies. Study programme aims, objectives and learning outcomes are for all durations interrelated and well structured so that students are sufficiently prepared for in-depth academic work in field given the overall requirements of research and competence capabilities of academic masters' degree in accordance with Bologna Declaration guidelines and local legislature.

In the accreditation application, RSU has added under "study programmes" study programme forms for both full-time and part time studies as well as for both the 60 CP as well the 80 CP programmes offered in English as well, which makes the panel assume that RSU applies for accreditation of English-taught programmes as well. However, there is no specific description of such programme so far, and all data contained under "study type and form" are copied from the Latvian-taught programmes (for instance, also for the English-taught full-time programme a "CE certificate in the Latvian language" is mentioned as admission requirement). In other words, the only element pointing at the existence of English-taught programmes is the label "English" on the programme form description in the platform's study program folder. RSU Faculty of law does also not market any English-taught programmes so far; its homepage clarifies on its entrance interface that "This faculty offers programmes only in Latvian".

During the last months a distance learning infrastructure has been built which will allow remote digitalized studies. The faculty feels that there is a need for these remote studies with regular contact phases being managed via ZOOM. Latvian expatriates and students from distant Latvian provinces could benefit from this approach. The distance learning e-environment has been designed. However, the descriptions of the study courses need to be provided and the whole operations will only be functional earliest in winter term 2021 or later. This leaves the current concept of distance learning to be verified in terms of detailed contents, client demand and stable functioning.

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

The Academic Master Programme with all its features was set up and run in full accordance with national regulations and standards and is offered full-time (part- time and for international clients intended); its structure and interacting modules are coherent. Aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements of the programme are well interrelated. It has to be remarked, anyway, that there is no specific description of the envisaged English-taught version of this programme, and all data contained under "study type and form" are copied from the Latvian-taught programmes. expatriates and students from distant Latvian provinces could benefit from distance learning programme, however, the precise study parameters for this form should be indicated

Strengths:

Coherence in all details provided.

Weaknesses:

- Distance study is not fully functionable yet.
- The parameters of the study programme (for example, admission requirements) have not been specifically revised for the study programme, which is intended to be implemented in English

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

### **Analysis**

The Academic Master Programme with all its features was set up and run in full accordance with national regulations and standards and is offered full-time (part- time and for international clients

intended). Graduates achieve the ability to independently research and analyse legal cases with professional knowledge and a legal toolkit that enables them to find solutions in complex legal situations .

The study courses are successive and build on the skills already acquired during the Bachelor studies. Research skills of students are developed. In cooperation with public administration institutions, the practical aspects of law are implemented in students' studies. This is true also for topics of Master's thesis', which often are found in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and other relevant offices and associations.

In order to teach the most relevant and market-oriented topics, courses are added and/or modernized from time to time. The more and more digitalised legal work environment and the Legal Tec approach in daily routine legal work have it made necessary to adapt in teaching, eLearning and IT infrastructure, thus catering for a digitalised services market in the field of law.

Courses, research papers, and theses are of high quality and comply with the learning outcomes. The Academic Master Programme is competitive in the market and has an output of highly employable graduates.

Interactive and dialogue-oriented lectures and seminars, using modern technologies are the core principle, mixed with independent learning efforts .

During the last months a distance learning infrastructure has been built which will allow remote digitalized studies. The faculty feels that there is a need for these remote studies with regular contact phases being managed via ZOOM. Latvian expatriates and students from distant Latvian provinces could benefit from this approach. The distance learning e-environment has been designed. However, the descriptions of the study courses need to be provided and the whole operations will only be functional earliest in winter term 2021 or later. This leaves the current concept of distance learning to be verified in terms of detailed contents, client demand and stable functioning.

Formative and summative evaluation, student evaluation and the overall student-oriented approach of the study implementation have already been described for the Bachelor Programme and are true in the Academic Master Programme also. Students are regularly invited to visit and actively take part in scientific conferences and gain practical experience in courts and administrations. Feedback from employers and students are taken into account in order to develop the Programme according to needs.

Incoming and outgoing mobilities take part on a regular basis - mostly based on Erasmus+ -, but participation is altogether weak. It would help the internationalisation efforts of the Programme to cluster courses that could be taught in English to meet interest and abilities of incoming foreign students and thus enhance outgoing numbers as well. The invitation of higher numbers of visiting foreign scholars teaching in English and adding subjects at that would also help the internationalisation effort. The necessary reshuffle would include the further improvement of language skills on the the teaching and the student side.

On the question of internationalisation, the Academic Master (as opposed to the Professional Master Programme) could offer an opportunity to attract foreign students with the side effect that outgoing mobility of Latvian master students could be enhanced also and the exchange of teaching staff would strengthen the trend towards internationalisation. Subjects and courses would have to be designed to support an international research and interest environment and language skills of teaching staff should be - for those in need - brushed up accordingly.

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

Altogether, the Academic Master Programme is mostly compliant with the prescribed requirements. Offering the Programme for part-time and full time studies is supported.

Remote teaching (distance learning) is currently being implemented.

#### Strengths:

The content of the studies is capable and set out to prepare specialists to analyse and solve legal issues in all contexts.

#### Weaknesses:

- The amount of students and their academic performance should be monitored in detail in order to safeguard the needfulness of the study programme in terms of graduates' employability.
- Demand, teaching capacities and course design for an English taught programme is not plausible, should be rethought and possibly adapted. This is strongly recommended.
- Cross border projects, research and activities through groups like Elsa and ILSA should lead to more involvement in international activities, given that a good number of active partnership agreements exist.

Given these criteria, the Academic Master Programme can be evaluated as 'good'.

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

#### **Analysis**

The financial resources of the study programme are based on the revenues from tuition fees paid by the students themselves or their employers.

RSU has the necessary infrastructure and material and technical support for the implementation of the study programme. Students have access to auditoriums that are equipped not only with the tables and chairs needed for study needs, but also with multimedia equipment and stationary presentation equipment. All university staff, i.e. academic, general and students, can use both the study rooms and the computer class, as well as the library. The Faculty of Law has special facilities, such as a courtroom and a forensic training room. The university also provides an internet connection, as well as access to internal information systems, where study materials are available, as well as internal normative documents and databases.

The library has the necessary legal literature, as well as several necessary databases. It is positive that the Library's Open Access subscription is available to RSU students and staff 24/7, but also the library's own working hours are suitable for students' needs. At the same time, two important issues emerged from expert interviews with students and graduates: a) the number of available books exponents in the RSU library is not sufficient. Students and graduates indicated that it should be higher, as well as the number of books in foreign languages does not satisfy the study's needs; b) outside the library, the availability of data in the RSU digital environment should be wider. If the study programme will be implemented in English, it would be necessary to supplement the range of available literature in English.

The platform for the distance studies has been established and are functional, quite few of the courses have an elaborate content in order to be used instantly in the study process. The representatives of the university pointed that it will take more than one year to completely tailor the contents of the study courses for distance learning.

RSU knows the needs of the students and has a well-functioning support system responding to the needs.

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

In general, it can be concluded that RSU has the necessary infrastructure and material and technical support for the implementation of the study programme, however, the range of literature available in English should be increased.

#### Strengths:

- The financial provision for the study program is currently sufficient.
- Infrastructure is constantly developed and meets the needs of the students and teachers.
- Study IT systems are good and supportive for students and teachers.
- The students' support system is based on the needs of the students and is functioning well.

#### Weaknesses:

- There is no diversity in budgetary incomes, which, given the unstable numbers of the students, may impede the development of the study program.
- The number of available books in the field of law in RSU library is not sufficient as well as availability of the books in English, German and/ or French should be wider.
- At the moment unclear evidence on distance learning system and RSU teacher ability to fully provide it.

### **4. Teaching Staff**

#### **Analysis**

An expanded stock of elected staff (12 elected, 45 invited) and an increased number of high level practitioners together stand for competence, high standard teaching and specialisation in prestigious law fields.

Aim is to form graduates who will have the ability to academically analyse professional issues.

No significant changes have taken place concerning the number and the set of qualifications of teachers.

A majority of lecturers, besides being research oriented, are recognised practitioners and experts, being high ranked in courts, institutions, administrations etc.

The overall quality of teachers helps to uphold a modern study environment. The invitation of visiting lecturers at a steady number add to the diversity of taught subjects.

Some lectures can be delivered in English, if the need for it comes up. This approach is described as being sped up in the future. The Management of the Study Direction Law has provided the panel with the information that the English proficiency of the teaching academic staff currently at level B2.

Teachers involved in the study programme conduct scientific work and publish accordingly, participate in conferences, give legal opinions and take part in EU funded projects.

Teaching staff participates in both outgoing and incoming mobility. However, mobility management system is insufficiently developed. In the last six years, ten lecturers have gone from the Faculty of Law to guest teaching under the Erasmus + program, although the total number of lecturers is 110. During the last six years, the Faculty of Law has hosted 12 guest lecturers under the Erasmus program. This indicator is also considered insufficient.

The mechanisms for mutual collaboration of teaching staff are much the same described in the same sections of the other study programmes.

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

As regards teaching staff, the study programme is fully compliant with the prescribed requirements. The faculty is encouraged to find incentives for more teaching staff mobility. The demand and design of the study programme to be offered wholly in English should be rethought.

#### Strengths:

- The panel is satisfied that the high number of guest lecturers does not disturb the consistency in the teaching process. On the other hand, it adds practical knowledge to scientific standards and makes the study less theoretical and more market oriented.

- Fluctuation amongst staff seems to be at a tolerable level.
- Staff seems to be approachable and student oriented.

#### Weaknesses:

- Low percentage of elected staff (Ratio 1 to 3,75)
  - Scientific publications and cross border projects should be a focus point of further development.
  - Academic staff could have higher research impact as well as citations in court rulings etc.
  - Teaching staff outgoing mobility is insufficient, there is no clear plan for its improvement.
- Altogether the evaluation is "good".

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Law Science"

### Requirements

1. The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Sample of attached diploma (annex. 24) is compliant with MK. Nr. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus"
2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 24.2 confirms that RSU has agreement in place with University of Latvia to provide students with options to continue education.
3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 24.3 confirms that institution guarantees compensation for losses if necessary.
4. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 6.1 - confirms that state language proficiency is compliant with MK. Nr. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi"
5. The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Letter from 02.12.2019 (Nr.60-6/319/2019) shows evidence of command of English at B2

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 24.7 confirms that academic staff complies with set requirements. Out of fifteen representatives of the academic staff there are 4 professors and 4 associate professors.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Sample of attached study agreement (annex 24.8) complies with MK. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi"

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Study courses and materials are prepared in accordance with requirements.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 24.9 confirms that Council for Higher Education has provided opinion and supports implementation of said academic Master's study programme.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 17.1 confirms that study programme complies with State Education Standard.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Attached resumes of staff confirms that each member of academic staff fulfills criteria regarding publications in accordance with legislature.

15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** All criteria assessed in this section are fully compliant with the requirements, making the overall result "fully compliant".

## Requirements (R6-R8)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provisions comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

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

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Altogether the study programme complies with the national requirements. Study programme parameters for distance study programme should be indicated and tailor made course descriptions should be prepared, taking into account specificity of this form. Demand, teaching capacities and course design for an English taught programme is not plausible, should be rethought and possibly adapted. This is strongly recommended.

Strengths:

- At some points the performance of RSU exceeds the required standards, e.g. the number of qualified teaching staff

- Study programme includes some interdisciplinary issues, especially in the field of healthcare and criminal procedural law/ enforcement

#### Weaknesses:

- Even though letter from 02.12.2019 Nr.60-6/319/20 confirming an English proficiency of B2 of the staff is provided, English language proficiency is - as demonstrated during the panel's visit to RSU - not well developed.
- Course descriptions are not tailor-made for distance study.

### Evaluation of the study programme "Law Science"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### 6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Law Science"

#### Short-term recommendations

Even though letter from 02.12.2019 Nr.60-6/319/20 confirming an English proficiency of B2 of the staff is provided, English language proficiency should be considerably improved among both staff and students.

Study courses descriptions should also be created in accordance with the form of distance learning studies.

Study programme parameters for distance learning form should be indicated.

The demand and design of the study programme to be offered wholly in English should be rethought. Subjects and courses would have to be designed to support an international research and interest environment.

Admission requirements for English taught programme should be revised.

#### Long-term recommendations

Courses could be adapted/augmented into coherent units covering all core issues of the respective field, which would allow the student to obtain not only a Master in law, but additionally a certified specialisation in health/medical law and criminal/criminal procedure law which would provide a clear framework for the so far only loosely connected electives on some (but not all) essential issues in health/medical law and criminal/criminal procedure law and would thus form a clear advantage on the job market – just as well as demonstrating RSU Faculty of Law's expertise in these two specialisations.

Another weakness/potential for improvement is partly connected to this issue – if RSU Faculty of Law's unique position in matters of these two specialisations (health/medical law and criminal/criminal procedure law) would be reflected in special courses taught in English as well, the Faculty could even address an international market, providing – for instance – an LL.M. programme in health and medical law. It may remain doubtful whether Latvian law taught in English by Latvian teachers would find high demand among foreign students, but courses or even an entire program on the highly internationalized matters of health and medical laws (e.g. IP and pharma, comparative studies on healthcare institutions/personnel liability issues, e-health etc.) would be more or less immediately highly competitive on both the EU and even global market.



The percentage of elected staff (ratio elected-invited: 1 to 3,75) is better than in BA, but still should be increased.

Scientific publications and cross border projects should be a focus point of further development.

Academic staff should have a higher research impact in peer reviewed publications with citations in other renowned publications as well as citations in court rulings as expert scholars.

RSU should find a way how to diversify the income for the study programme.

## II. "Law Science" ASSESSMENT

### II. "Law Science" ASSESSMENT

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

The professional master study programme "Law Science" (47380) is offered in both in full and part time study form:

- Full time with duration 2 years (80 CP) in Latvian and English with admission requirements: Academic Bachelor's degree in law;
- Full time with duration 1 year 6 months (60 CP) in Latvian and English with admission requirements: Professional Bachelor's degree in law,
- Part time with duration 2 years and 6 months (80 CP) in Latvian and English with admission requirements: Academic Bachelor's degree in law;
- Part time with duration 2 years (60 CP) in Latvian and English with admission requirements: Professional Bachelor's degree in law.

The study programme with all durations is coherent and well prepared. The aim of the study programme is to prepare highly qualified specialists – lawyers – with a specialisation in the field of civil law, national law, criminal law, international and medical law who can successfully work in the context of national and international social and legal processes, to identify, analyse, and solve issues of legal nature by harmonising interests of an individual and those of the society.

Admission requirements are reasonable and developed taking into account the overall aims and objectives of studies. Study program aims, objectives and learning outcomes are interrelated and well structured so that students are sufficiently prepared for in-depth academic work and possible lawyers qualification examination.

In the accreditation application, RSU has added under "study programmes" study programme forms for both full-time and part time studies as well as for both the 60 CP as well the 80 CP programmes offered in English as well, which makes the panel assume that RSU applies for accreditation of English-taught programmes as well. Anyway, there is no specific description of such programme so far, and data contained under "study type and form" are copied from the Latvian-taught programmes (for instance, also for the English-taught full-time programme a "CE certificate in the Latvian language" is mentioned as admission requirement). In other words, the only element pointing at the existence of English-taught programmes is the label "English" on the programme form description in the platform's study program folder. RSU Faculty of law does also not market any English-taught programmes so far; its homepage clarifies on its entrance interface that "This faculty offers programmes only in Latvian".

During the last months a distance learning infrastructure has been built which will allow remote digitalized studies. The faculty feels that there is a need for these remote studies with regular contact phases being managed via ZOOM. Latvian expatriates and students from distant Latvian

provinces could benefit from this approach. The distance learning e-environment has been designed. However, the descriptions of the study courses need to be provided and the whole operations will only be functional earliest in winter term 2021 or later.

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

Aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements of the programme are well interrelated.

The name of the study programme, the degree, the professional qualification to be acquired as well as the overall structure are coherent, and the modules within the programme interrelate with each other.

It has to be remarked, anyway, that there is no specific description of the envisaged English-taught version of this programme, and all data contained under “study type and form” are copied from the Latvian-taught programmes. Same applies for distant teaching.

Strengths:

Coherence in all details provided

Weaknesses:

The current concept of distance learning has to be verified in terms of detailed contents, client demand and stable functioning. The same applies for the intent to offer the entire programme in English as well.

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

### **Analysis**

The Professional Master Programme (80 or 60 Latvian CP) was established in order to provide to students legal skills and knowledge required in order to pass the Latvian bar exams or of other licensed legal professions, which is reflected in the – compared to the Academic Master – extended exams (additionally to the defence of the MA thesis, the student has to pass the unified lawyer’s qualification examination). The qualification awarded is a “Lawyer”. Beyond the general legal skills and knowledge also provided within the academic Master, the Professional Master thus also comprises instruction in skills and knowledge understanding the specificities of professional activity, responsibility, and ethics, enabling the student to analyse legal issues in a wider comparative context and offer unconventional solutions, making it in these terms also fully compliant with the 15.01.2019. Minister cabinet regulations No. 46 “Procedure for the Professional Qualification Examination of the State Unified Lawyer”.

The traineeship and the final thesis are of high quality and comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The content is relevant and complementary, and it complies with the aims of the study.

The Master Programme is complying with requirements imposed by Latvian law and is offered both in form of full-time as well as part-time studies, and there are plans to offer the programme in English as well – in that case targeting mainly foreign students with CIS provenience, but there are no specific plans to establish an English-taught study programme for the next two years. However, RSU have created the “shells” for English taught curricula.

The study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods, contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centred learning and teaching principles are taken into account.

The Professional Master Programme’s curriculum is content-wise comprehensive and delivered on a high quality, as demonstrated by the feedback received from students, alumni and employers.

Students marked, however, that practical aspects of the work of a lawyer – e.g. in terms of reading and handing files, setting up legal documents/opinions etc. – could be slightly strengthened within the curriculum, as students who work parallel to their studies (who form the majority) often perform work beyond the core of legal professions, e.g. in banks, administration or state agencies, where practical experiences are not strictly law-related. Beyond that, the two main specialisations of the RSU Faculty of law – law in health and medical matters as well as criminal/criminal procedure law – also within this curriculum are either compulsory or elective classes, i.e. there is no clear coherent system which would support the development of a clear specialty in any of these areas.

RSU has forwarded the concept for the implementation of Distance Learning, developed by the Centre for Educational Growth. RSU endeavors to implement remote studies in a step by step approach, starting with the initiation of a fully functional technological base for the implementation of distance learning (E-studies portal, video platform etc.). Study course topics, study materials and the whole communication infrastructure between lecturers and students are currently under way to be implemented (see the concept paper 'Introduction of Distance Learning at RSU'), starting with an offer for remote studies first towards already enrolled students as an alternative to full time or part time studies.

In further steps, the remote studies offer is intended to be extended towards other clientel, such as practitioners who want to avail from further education opportunities from home and at their own time.

Elected staff, visiting lecturers and students will get opportunities to adapt and try out the new study environment. Constant IT- support is available.

During the last months a distance learning infrastructure has been built which will allow remote digitalized studies. The faculty feels that there is a need for these remote studies with regular contact phases being managed via ZOOM. Latvian expatriates and students from distant Latvian provinces could benefit from this approach. The distance learning e-environment has been designed. However, the descriptions of the study courses need to be provided and the whole operations will only be functional earliest in winter term 2021 or later. This leaves the current concept of distance learning to be verified in terms of detailed contents, client demand and stable functioning. The student number has remained steady and has even increased since the last accreditation, demonstrating that RSU faculty has successfully identified a niche within the Latvian legal education market. This, anyway, does not yet refer to the international market; the programme is hardly perceived by international students, and little measures have been taken which could open the programme internationally – even though there would quite probably be a high demand for a Master in Law and Healthcare, for instance. Also beyond that, students make little use of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities; in the rare case when international exchange does take place, learning outcomes achieved during such mobility are recognised.

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

The Professional Master Programme is at present a content-wise coherent and well-established programme addressing Latvian students envisaging a lawyer's profession. It seems highly doubtful that in the Professional Master Programme, which must have a special design to be able to qualify students to pass the State Exam, any demand can be found to offer studies of the programme as such fully in English. It is recommended to rethink this approach carefully and act accordingly. As RSU plans to implement this study programme in distance form as well, study course descriptions should be prepared according to this form.

Strengths:

- The curriculum complies with Latvian legal requirements and is composed according to the needs of practice;

-students are able to provide feedback/actively develop the programme further, their interests are well taken into account.

Weaknesses :

- Reduced visibility of the two main specialisations of the RSU Faculty of law – law in health and medical matters as well as criminal/criminal procedure law – in the composition of the curriculum, where courses are at present either compulsory or elective classed, among which the last can be chosen as mere add-ons to the base content provided in compulsory classes.
- Demand, teaching capacities and course design for an English taught programme is not plausible, should be rethought and possibly adapted. This is strongly recommended.
- Course descriptions for distance form are not tailor-made.
- Cross-border projects, research and activities through groups like Elsa and ILSA should lead to more involvement in international activities, given that a good number of active partnership agreements exist.

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

#### **Analysis**

The financial resources of the study programme are based on the revenues from tuition fees paid by the students themselves or their employers.

RSU has the necessary infrastructure and material and technical support for the implementation of the study programme. Students have access to auditoriums that are equipped not only with the tables and chairs needed for study needs, but also with multimedia equipment and stationary presentation equipment. All university staff, i.e. academic, general and students, can use both the study rooms and the computer class, as well as the library. The Faculty of Law has special facilities, such as a courtroom and a forensic training room. The university also provides an internet connection, as well as access to internal information systems, where study materials are available, as well as internal normative documents and databases.

The library has the necessary legal literature, as well as several necessary databases. It is positive that the Library's Open Access subscription is available to RSU students and staff 24/7, but also the library's own working hours are suitable for students' needs. At the same time, two important issues emerged from expert interviews with students and graduates: a) the number of available books exponents in the RSU library is not sufficient. Students and graduates indicated that it should be higher, as well as the number of books in foreign languages does not satisfy the study's needs; b) outside the library, the availability of data in the RSU digital environment should be wider. If the study programme will be implemented in English, it would be necessary to supplement the range of available literature in English.

The platform for the distance studies has been established and are functional, quite few of the courses have an elaborate content in order to be used instantly in the study process. The representatives of the university pointed that it will take more than one year to completely tailor the contents of the study courses for distance learning.

RSU knows the needs of the students and has a well-functioning support system responding to the needs.

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

In general, it can be concluded that RSU has the necessary infrastructure and material and technical support for the implementation of the study programme. However, the number of available books exponents in the RSU library is not sufficient. Students and graduates indicated that it should be higher, as well as the number of books in foreign languages does not satisfy the study's needs;

these should also enable and more encourage distance learning.

**Strengths:**

- The financial provision for the study programme is currently sufficient.
- Infrastructure is constantly developed and meets the needs of the students and teachers.
- Study IT systems are good and supportive for students and teachers.
- The students' support system is based on the needs of the students and is functioning well.

**Weaknesses:**

- There is no diversity in budgetary incomes, which may impede the development of the study programme.
- The number of available books in the field of law in RSU library is not sufficient as well as availability of the books in English, German and/ or French should be wider.
- At the moment unclear evidence on distance learning system and RSU teacher ability to fully provide it.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

Full referral to the analysis under the same heading, assessing the Bachelor study programme.

In addition, it is to be mentioned that a significant number of elected teaching staff (10 elected, 31 invited) has obtained a doctoral degree since the last accreditation.

There is a focus on employing capable, competent and practice-oriented lecturers on a long-term basis, thus adding stability and consistency to the study programme.

Young and new lecturers are enticed to take part in joint research, projects and publications.

Fluctuation rates of teaching staff are low. Management and students both have in their respective interview sessions conformed that visiting and invited lecturers stay on for longer periods and thus add to the stability of the teaching efforts

The invitation rate of visiting lecturers, bringing new insights, topics and methods to the study programme are on a satisfactory level.

Almost all lecturers involved in the study programme are recognised experts in their respective fields with research activities and practical skills and working knowledge, combining science, lecturing and professional work (publications in Annexes 6.4 and 6.5).

However, the measurable research impact (citations) in renowned and peer reviewed journals as well as citations in court rulings could be enhanced in the future.

It is planned to adapt to teaching courses in English with rising demand from recipients in a step by step approach as well as the ongoing further qualification of academic staff in English proficiency. Overall the Management of the Study Direction Law has provided the panel with the statement that the current English proficiency level of the academic staff is B2.

Some lecturers are taking part in EU funded projects and/or are invited to the Constitutional Court to provide professional opinions.

Teaching staff participates in both outgoing and incoming mobility. However, mobility management system is insufficiently developed. In the last six years, 10 lecturers have gone from the Faculty of Law to guest teaching under the Erasmus + program, although the total number of lecturers is 110. During the last six years, the Faculty of Law has hosted 12 guest lecturers under the Erasmus program. This indicator is also considered insufficient.

Cooperation between teaching staff is observed through joint faculty council meetings, jointly created study courses, serving on panels and commissions and trying interdisciplinary teaching approaches.

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Regarding teaching staff, the study programme fully complies with the prescribed requirements. However, teaching staff English knowledge should be improved and outgoing mobility is should be increased. The demand and design of the study programme to be offered wholly in English should be rethought.

Strengths:

- The panel is satisfied that the high number of guest lecturers does not disturb the consistency in the teaching process. On the other hand, it adds practical knowledge to scientific standards and makes the study less theoretical and more market oriented.
- Fluctuation amongst staff seems to be at a tolerable level.
- Staff seems to be approachable and student oriented.

The enactment of studies in English are taken step by step, in line with the rising in standard of English speaking and teaching abilities of all staff shouldering the study programme.

Weaknesses:

- The percentage of elected staff is very low.
- Scientific publications and cross border projects should be a focus point of further development.
- Academic staff could have higher research impact as well as citations in court rulings etc.
- Teaching staff outgoing mobility is insufficient, there is no clear plan for its improvement.

Altogether the evaluation is "good".

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Law Science"

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Sample of attached diploma (annex. 24) is compliant with MK. Nr. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus"

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 24.2 confirms that RSU has agreement in place with University of Latvia to provide students with options to continue education.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 24.3 confirms that institution guarantees compensation for losses if necessary.

- 4 4. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 6.1 - confirms that state language proficiency is compliant with MK. Nr. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".
- 5 5. The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Command of English confirmed by letter from 02.12.2019 Nr.60-6/319/2019
- 6 6. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant  
**Justification:**
- 7 7. The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant  
**Justification:**
- 8 8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Study courses and materials are prepared in accordance with requirements.
- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex. 18.2 and 18.3 confirms that study programme complies with requirements for professional qualification.
- 10 10. The study programme complies with the valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided that the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex. 18.2 and 18.3 confirms that study programme complies with requirements for professional qualification.
- 11 11. Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant  
**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 17.1 confirms that study programme complies with State Education Standard.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Attached resumes of staff confirms that each member of academic staff fulfills criteria regarding publications in accordance with legislature.

15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** All criteria assessed in this section are fully compliant with the requirements, making the overall result "fully compliant".

## Requirements (R6-R8)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Practical aspects of the work of a lawyer – e.g. in terms of reading and handing files, setting up legal documents/opinions etc. – could be slightly strengthened within the curriculum.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants complies with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

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

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Altogether the study programme complies with the national requirements. Study programme



parameters for distance study programme should be indicated and tailor made course descriptions should be prepared, taking into account specificity of this form. Demand, teaching capacities and course design for an English taught programme is not plausible, should be rethought and possibly adapted. This is strongly recommended.

**Strengths:**

- At some points the performance of RSU exceeds the required standards, e.g. the number of qualified teaching staff
- Study programme includes some interdisciplinary issues, especially in the field of healthcare and criminal procedural law/ enforcement

**Weaknesses:**

- Even though letter from 02.12.2019 Nr.60-6/319/20 confirming an English proficiency of B2 of the staff is provided, English language proficiency is - as demonstrated during the panel's visit to RSU - not well developed.
- Course descriptions are not tailor-made for distance study.

**Evaluation of the study programme "Law Science"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

**6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Law Science"**

**Short-term recommendations**

Even though letter from 02.12.2019 Nr.60-6/319/20 confirming an English proficiency of B2 of the staff is provided, English language proficiency should be considerably improved among both staff and students.

Course descriptions have to be adapted for distance study.

Study programme parameters for distance teaching forms should be indicated.

The demand and design of the study programme to be offered wholly in English should be rethought.

**Long-term recommendations**

Scientific publications and cross border projects should be a focus point of further development.

Academic staff should have a higher research impact in peer reviewed publications with citations in other renowned publications as well as citations in court rulings as expert scholars.

A clear strategy for improving teaching staff outgoing mobility should be established.

The current concept of distance learning has to be verified in terms of detailed contents, client demand and stable functioning.

RSU should find a way how to diversify the income for the study programme.

**II. "Law Science" ASSESSMENT**

## **II. "Law Science" ASSESSMENT**

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

#### **Analysis**

The doctoral study programme "Law Science " (Full time 120 Latvian CP, 51380) indicators and structure are coherent and well prepared. The degree awarded is a "Doctor of legal science (PhD)". Admission procedure and requirements comply with the aim of programme and are prepared in order to ascertain applicants' compliance with the doctoral study programme. Aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the doctoral study program are well interrelated and prepared to ensure successful studies.

In the accreditation application, RSU has added under "study programmes" a programme offered in English as well, which makes the panel assume that RSU applies for accreditation of this English-taught program as well. Anyway, there is no specific description of such programme so far, and all data contained under "study type and form" are copied from the Latvian-taught programmes (it even states explicitly "The same as in study programme in Latvian" e.g. for admission requirements). In other words, the only element pointing at the existence of English-taught programmes is the label "English" on the programme form description in the platform's study programme folder. RSU Faculty of law does also not market any English-taught programme so far; its homepage clarifies on its entrance interface that "This faculty offers programmes only in Latvian".

During the last months a distance learning infrastructure has been built which will allow remote digitalized studies. The faculty feels that there is a need for these remote studies with regular contact phases being managed via ZOOM. Latvian expatriates and students from distant Latvian provinces could benefit from this approach. The distance learning e-environment has been designed. However, the descriptions of the study courses need to be provided and the whole operations will only be functional earliest in winter term 2021 or later. This leaves the current concept of distance learning to be verified in terms of detailed contents, client demand and stable functioning.

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

Aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements of the programme are well interrelated. The name of the study programme, the degree as well as the overall structure have been established in a coherent manner, and individual modules interrelate with each other. It has to be remarked, anyway, that there is no specific description of the envisaged English-taught version of this programme, and data contained under "study type and form" are copied from the Latvian-taught programmes. Same applies for distant teaching.

Strengths:

Coherence in all details provided

Weaknesses:

- The parameters of the study programme (for example, admission requirements) have not been specifically revised to be implemented in English as well as for distance learning.

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

#### **Analysis**

RSU Faculty of Law's Doctoral study programme "Law science" has been established with the goal to prepare a new generation of legal scientists focused on the vision to be highly qualified specialists of law, thus promoting society growth of the Republic of Latvia based on knowledge and innovations,

and therefore welfare and sustainability of the Republic of Latvia, and both the curriculum as well as the feedback from doctoral students confirm that the programme in general matches these expectations. The curriculum consists on compulsory courses mainly providing instruction on thorough research and writing skills and is supplemented by electives on rather general fields of law, which are designed to level the field among young researchers focusing on a very diverse range of legal problems.

The study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods, contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centred learning and teaching principles are taken into account.

The outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students, employers, and graduates are used to improve the quality of studies.

The ratio of incoming foreign students is low. Besides joint conferences and a trickle of exchange internationally, the international endeavours for the Law Field are rather dormant. Also beyond that, students make little use of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities; in the rare case when international exchange does take place, learning outcomes achieved during such mobility are recognised.

In terms of distance teaching, RSU has forwarded the concept for the implementation of Distance Learning, developed by the Centre for Educational Growth. RSU endeavors to implement remote studies in a step by step approach, starting with the initiation of a fully functional technological base for the implementation of distance learning (E-studies portal, video platform etc.). Study course topics, study materials and the whole communication infrastructure between lecturers and students are currently under way to be implemented (see the concept paper 'Introduction of Distance Learning at RSU'), starting with an offer for remote studies first towards already enrolled students as an alternative to full time or part time studies.

The curriculum also complies with requirements established by Latvian law, but falls somewhat short of the Bologna and Salzburg declarations, which both point out that in contrast to BA and MA studies, doctoral studies are a “different pathway” where the studies have the primary goal “to develop research-based thinking in order to foster flexibility of opinions, creativity, and intellectual independence through working on original research projects” – on other words, the doctoral student is not any more mere addressee of academic teaching, but autonomously contributes to research him/herself by discussing, sharing and further developing one’s proper research in close and equal cooperation with other doctoral students and the university’s permanent researchers, i.e. the academic staff, via e.g. research seminars. Even though conferences are provided regularly and doctoral students are encouraged to participate in these just as well as in similar formats offered abroad, free and autonomous academic discussion is not reflected in the doctoral studies curriculum itself – even though this element should form the main focus of doctoral studies.

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

The Doctoral Study Programme has been well received by students so far, and also employers confirmed the advanced legal skills and knowledge of graduates of this programme.

### **Strengths:**

- The curriculum offers all necessary instruction to research for and write a doctoral thesis and also complies with Latvian regulations of the issue.
- The Doctoral Study Programme has been well received by students so far, and also employers confirmed the advanced legal skills and knowledge of graduates of this programme.

### **Weaknesses:**

- The active and autonomous role of the doctoral student should be strengthened in the curriculum

by including doctoral seminars and the like, providing doctoral students to discuss and further develop their thesis step by step under detailed and real-time review by other doctoral students and permanent academic staff.

- Internationalisation is not very well established.

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

#### **Analysis**

The financial resources of the study programme are based on the revenues from tuition fees paid by the students themselves or their employers.

RSU has the necessary infrastructure and material and technical support for the implementation of the study programme. Students have access to auditoriums that are equipped not only with the tables and chairs needed for study needs, but also with multimedia equipment and stationary presentation equipment. All university staff, i.e. academic, general and students, can use both the study rooms and the computer class, as well as the library. The Faculty of Law has special facilities, such as a courtroom and a forensic training room. The university also provides an internet connection, as well as access to internal information systems, where study materials are available, as well as internal normative documents and databases.

The library has the necessary legal literature, as well as several necessary databases. It is positive that the Library's Open Access subscription is available to RSU students and staff 24/7, but also the library's own working hours are suitable for students' needs. At the same time, two important issues emerged from expert interviews with students and graduates: a) the number of available books exponents in the RSU library is not sufficient. Students and graduates indicated that it should be higher, as well as the number of books in foreign languages does not satisfy the study's needs; b) outside the library, the availability of data in the RSU digital environment should be wider.

RSU knows the needs of the students and has a well-functioning support system responding to the needs.

During the last months a distance learning infrastructure has been built which will allow remote digitalized studies. The faculty feels that there is a need for these remote studies with regular contact phases being managed via ZOOM. Latvian expatriates and students from distant Latvian provinces could benefit from this approach. The distance learning e-environment has been designed. However, the descriptions of the study courses need to be provided and the whole operations will only be functional earliest in winter term 2021 or later. This leaves the current concept of distance learning to be verified in terms of detailed contents, client demand and stable functioning.

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

In general, it can be concluded that RSU has the necessary infrastructure and material and technical support for the implementation of the study programme. However, the literature available in English should be increased

Strengths:

- Infrastructure is constantly developed and meets the needs of the students and teachers.
- Study IT systems are good and supportive for students and teachers.
- The students' support system is based on the needs of the students and is functioning well.

Weaknesses :

- There is no diversity in budgetary incomes, which, given the unstable numbers of the students, may impede the development of the study program.

- The number of available books in the field of law in RSU library is not sufficient as well as availability of the books in English, German and/ or French should be wider.

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

##### **Analysis**

In the doctoral study programme nearly all study courses are taught by academic staff with a degree of a doctor of science with the exception of Foreign Languages in Legal Sciences, which are taught by lecturers with a Master's degree.

All supervisors of doctoral thesis's have a degree of a doctor of sciences, as well as the status of an expert of the Latvian Council of Science.

The management of the Study Direction Law has provided the panel with the statement that the English proficiency level of the academic teaching staff is currently B2.

As the doctoral study programme is planned to be offered in the English language in a step by step approach according to language abilities and demand for such studies, there needs to be further conclusive development of the courses that would be offered in English, the clients for such studies and the design of a doctoral programme in English as such.

The study programme is in compliance with with the regulations of the regulatory enactments.

There is not much fluctuation among the teaching staff, guaranteeing for stability and scientific research as well as internationally quotable publications, fired by an incentive scheme.

The use of electronic databases, interaction with Latvian and foreign institutions, publishing and teaching activities cross-border are setting the ground for a lively and fruitful research environment.

All academic staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme is highly qualified and take part in conferences as well as working groups, advising state institutions in further developing law.

There are regular trainings on different subjects, teaching methods and the best use of the modern IT infrastructure for teaching and supervising purposes .

There are regular guest lectures on topical and upcoming issues of law, both Latvia, European/International.

The doctoral study programme is created in accordance with the recommendation for development of the European Higher Education Area, thus able to prepare highly qualified and competitive specialists.

Academic staff in the programme extensively take part in projects, funded nationally or on a European or international level. Almost all of the staff in the programme publish in renowned publications or are authors or co- authors of monographs in different fields of research. However, the involvement in internationally published and recognized research needs enhancement. The exchange of opinions and research outcomes among the doctoral students and with their supervisors lead to an innovation-driven scientific discourse.

Teaching staff participates in both outgoing and incoming mobility. However, mobility management system is insufficiently developed. In the last six years, ten lecturers have gone from the Faculty of Law to guest teaching under the Erasmus + program, although the total number of lecturers is 110. During the last six years, the Faculty of Law has hosted 12 guest lecturers under the Erasmus program. This indicator is also considered insufficient.

Cooperation among teaching staff is secured by mutual feedback seminars, joint and interdisciplinary courses.

Lecturers, supervisors and students form a research-oriented team, strongly interacting among each other.

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

Regarding teaching staff, the study programme fully complies with the prescribed requirements. There is not much fluctuation among the teaching staff, guaranteeing for stability and scientific research as well as internationally quotable publications, fired by an incentive scheme.

Strengths:

- Academic staff teaching at doctoral level consists wholly of researchers with a PhD
- Fluctuation amongst staff seems to be at a tolerable level.
- Staff seems to be approachable and student oriented.

Weaknesses:

- International scientific publications and cross border projects should be a focus point of further development.
- The demand and design of the study programme to be offered wholly in English should be rethought.
- Teaching staff outgoing mobility is insufficient, there is no clear plan for its improvement.

Altogether the evaluation is "good".

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Law Science"

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Sample of attached diploma (annex. 24) is compliant with MK. Nr. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus"

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 24.2 confirms that RSU has agreement in place with University of Latvia to provide students with options to continue education.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 24.3 confirms that institution guarantees compensation for losses if necessary.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 6.1 - confirms that state language proficiency is compliant with MK. Nr. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi"

- 5 5. The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Letter from 02.12.2019 Nr.60-6/319/20 confirming an English proficiency of B2 of the staff is provided.
- 6 6. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Fully compliant - Annex 24.6 and 24.7. confirms that 12 teaching staff members are with doctoral degree and among academic staff of which 4 are experts approved by Latvian Science Council.
- 7 7. The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 24.6 and 24.7 confirms that academic staff complies with set requirements. Out of ten representatives of the academic staff there are 4 professors and 2 associate professors.
- 8 8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Sample of attached study agreement (annex 24.8) complies with MK. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi"
- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Study courses and materials are prepared in accordance with requirements.
- 10 10. The study programme complies with the valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided that the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant  
**Justification:** N/A
- 11 11. Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 24.9 confirms that Council for Higher Education has provided opinion and supports implementation of said doctoral study programme.
- 12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant  
**Justification:** N/A

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:** N/A

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Attached resumes of staff confirms that each member of academic staff fulfills criteria regarding publications in accordance with legislature.

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** All criteria assessed in this section are fully compliant with the requirements, making the overall result "fully compliant".

## Requirements (R6-R8)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provisions comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Qualifications of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants are assumed to comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme falls somewhat short of the Bologna and Salzburg declarations, which both point out that in contrast to BA and MA studies, doctoral studies are a "different pathway".

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The curriculum altogether complies with requirements established by Latvian law, but falls somewhat short of the Bologna and Salzburg declarations, which both point out that in contrast to BA and MA studies, doctoral studies are a "different pathway".



Strengths:

At some points the performance of RSU exceeds the required standards, e.g. the number of qualified teaching staff.

Weaknesses:

- Course descriptions are not tailor-made for distance study.
- Lack of doctoral seminars etc. enabling students to actively share and develop their research autonomously.

## **Evaluation of the study programme "Law Science"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Law Science"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

Even though letter from 02.12.2019 Nr.60-6/319/20 confirming an English proficiency of B2 of the staff is provided, English language proficiency should be considerably improved among both staff and students, definitely for those intended to teach in an English-taught study programme, and certainly before the English-taught programme is initiated.

Course descriptions for distance learning have to be adapted.

### **Long-term recommendations**

Doctoral students should on behalf of the university be provided a framework of daily/weekly opportunities to share their research progress with colleagues and supervisors, as the private organisation by doctoral students themselves of such opportunities will generally incur considerable and an to large degree superfluous efforts. On the other hand, it is questionable whether independent researchers would still be in need for such a considerable amount of compulsory elective classes ("B"), which makes the curriculum rather resemble a MA programme in this point; a doctoral student should general already have a command of the rather basic content provided by the compulsory electives.

The other point which provides potential for improvement is, just as for the MA programmes, the international dimension of the programme; while it may remain controversial whether it makes sense to transfer the entire doctoral programme into English (after all, there is also a need to keep and further develop Latvian legal terminology and advanced legal writing), there is definitely a need to keep doctoral research connected to the state of the art in research in the respective field, which ultimately requires professional competences in legal English in both reading and writing. While the first has probably at least partly been tackled already by the course "foreign Language in Legal Science", one should consider teaching also some international issues themselves in English - and establish e.g. the requirements to publish at least a certain number of academic papers in renowned international academic journals or engage otherwise actively in international research.

Scientific publications and cross border projects should be a focus point of further development.

The demand and design of the study programme to be offered wholly in English should be rethought.

A clear strategy for improving teaching staff outgoing mobility should be established.

The current concept of distance learning has to be verified in terms of detailed contents, client demand and stable functioning. The same applies for the intent to offer the entire programme in English as well.

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

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

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

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:	Fully compliant		The self assessment report provides enough information to fully support compliance with this criterion.
R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.	Fully compliant		RSU cooperates with various national organisations, e.g. state police, and on international level (ELFA), ensuring these aims, but international cooperation could still be improved; however, these shortcomings do not make RSU yet partially compliant only.
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).	Fully compliant		The information provided in the self assessment report supports that the level of scientific research is compliant.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.		Partially compliant	Only some of the recommendations of the previous assessment have been fully implemented (see I. 6).

#### 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	Law Science (43380)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
2	Law Science (45380)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
3	Law Science (47380)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
4	Law Science (51380)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

#### The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

None