

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: University of Latvia

Study field: Law

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

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The University of Latvia (UL), established in 1919, is a classical university in Latvia and a cornerstone of the country's higher education and research landscape. It offers study programmes at all levels across 28 scientific disciplines and 22 study fields, fostering excellence in humanities, natural sciences, technical fields, and social sciences. The Faculty of Law (FL) at UL plays an important role in this framework, delivering comprehensive legal education through bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programmes.

The UL FL offers a comprehensive range of traditional and specialized programmes to meet diverse academic and professional needs. The academic bachelor's programme in "Law" (43 380) provides foundational theoretical and practical knowledge, serving as a gateway to advanced studies. Graduates can pursue the professional master's programme in "Law" (47 380) for specialized expertise and professional competence, and subsequently, the doctoral programme in "Law" (51 380) to deepen research capabilities. The FL also offers the interdisciplinary academic master's programme "Law and Governance of Institutions" (45 380), combining legal and managerial skills. Addressing specific professional demands, the "Pre-trial Investigation" programmes at both bachelor's (42 380) and master's (47 380) levels prepare students for careers in investigative and law enforcement fields, demonstrating the FL responsiveness to societal needs and its commitment to a diverse legal education.

The FL academic staff, featuring nationally leading legal scholars, highly experienced practitioners, and successful alumni are a significant strength. The diverse and highly qualified academic team enriches the learning environment by blending academic expertise with practical insights. However, a significant portion of teaching staff is not principally employed at the UL FL, leading to an imbalance in workload distribution between teaching, research, and administrative duties. Additionally, while academic freedom is well-supported, limited interdisciplinarity and a lack of funding acquisition for transdisciplinary research constrain the faculty's ability to engage in broader and internationally recognized academic collaborations.

A robust quality assurance system aligned with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015) ensures systematic programme evaluation and compliance. This framework is strengthened by mandatory student feedback mechanisms and employer/graduate surveys, leading to meaningful curriculum improvements. Despite these advances, insufficient transparency in addressing and communicating feedback is noticeable.

Variety of teaching practices is a visible feature of the UL FL students' experience, with moot court competitions, legal clinics, and e-learning platform offering dynamic and practical learning opportunities. These initiatives are supported by strong collaborations with esteemed institutions, nationally and internationally. However, the absence of a coordinated internationalization strategy and limited utilization of new elements of Erasmus+ programmes hinder the faculty's ability to maximize global opportunities and foster an international learning environment. Furthermore, a lack of structured action plans for "internationalization at home" further restricts the scope of global engagement.

The UL FL faces several challenges in infrastructure and resource availability that impact the academic experience for both students and staff. While the faculty provides a very good access to e-resources, databases, and software tools, physical infrastructure shows limitations. The Raina

Boulevard campus lacks essential amenities such as on-site dining facilities, which could enhance student and staff convenience. Additionally, the facilities are not adequately equipped to accommodate students with disabilities or special needs, limiting inclusivity and accessibility. Furthermore, the absence of specialized equipment for programmes like "Pre-trial Investigation" restricts hands-on training opportunities crucial for practical skill development. Addressing these infrastructure gaps is essential to create a more supportive and inclusive learning environment and to fully realize the potential of the FL educational offerings.

The absence of advanced analytical tools and effective data collection processes restricts the FL capacity to implement predictive strategies for proactive programmes adjustments and long-term planning. By addressing these gaps through the adoption of advanced analytics, improved data collection systems, and transparent feedback integration, the faculty can strengthen its strategic planning capabilities and enhance its responsiveness to stakeholders needs.

In conclusion, the UL FL stands out for its alignment with societal needs, innovative offer of the programmes in the field of law, and a highly qualified academic staff. However, these strengths are offset by infrastructure limitations, transparency issues, gaps in strategic planning, internationalization, and interdisciplinarity. By addressing these challenges, the faculty can further solidify its reputation as a leading institution in legal education and research, enhancing its impact both locally and globally.

## **I - Assessment of the Study Field**

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#### **1.1 Management of the Study Field**

##### **Analysis**

1.1.1. The medium-term development strategy for 2021–2027 of the University of Latvia (UL) outlines strategic goals across six development areas, categorized under two key domains: "Development of Principal Activities" and "Institutional Development" (SAR, p. 9–10).

In the domain of "Development of Principal Activities", the UL identifies three strategic goals:

- Establishing an internationally recognized research university, reflecting ambitions for global competitiveness in research and academic excellence.
- Offering a unique study portfolio and ensuring the high competitiveness of graduates, thereby meeting current and future labour market needs.
- Positioning university activities as a catalyst for Latvia's growth, emphasizing the institution's role in societal and economic development.

For "Institutional Development", the strategy highlights the following goals:

- Implementing a development- and excellence-oriented HR policy, focusing on professional growth and staff engagement.
- Promoting green thinking and creating an attractive, sustainable university environment, aligning with global sustainability trends.
- Establishing an inclusive, cooperation- and innovation-focused culture supported by effective administrative processes (SAR, p. 10).

The aims of the study field "Law" (study field) are clearly defined in the SAR, following the logical framework of the UL's six development directions. These aims are both relevant and attainable,

designed to align with the institution's overarching strategic goals. They include:

- Ensuring quality research in law, presenting findings through publications and scientific conferences, and maintaining relevance and a high profile in the legal sector and broader society.
- Ensuring student-centered, inclusive, and science- and practice-based studies, enabling students to acquire professional and transversal competencies aligned with future needs.
- Ensuring national leadership in study and research programmes in the field of law, ensuring visibility, credibility, and credibility of the contribution aligned with societal interests and needs (SAR, p. 17-18).
- Providing opportunities for excellence-oriented staff development, renewal, and collaboration for the quality pursuit of a unified academic work in studies, research, and administrative management.
- Establishing an open, sustainable, collaborative, and innovative ecosystem for studies, research, and management, supported by environmentally friendly and modern infrastructure.
- Ensuring respectful cooperation and well-being among students and staff, an innovation-oriented and inclusive organizational culture (SAR, p. 18).

By anchoring these aims in the UL Strategy 2021-2027 (SAR, p. 9, 17), the study field ensures a strong alignment with the UL vision and strategic priorities. This connection not only reinforces the coherence of the study field's aims within the broader institutional framework but also ensures that resources, policies, and efforts are directed toward shared objectives, fostering synergy across different areas of the university.

The logical structuring of the goals, as presented in the SAR, ensures that they address both immediate and long-term needs of the academic community, the legal profession, and broader societal expectations. These goals are generally aligned with contemporary challenges, the needs and the development trends of the society and national economy, such as the demand for high-quality research, inclusive education, sustainability, and innovation. This alignment was further validated during meetings with alumni and employers conducted during the assessment visit. Such stakeholder confirmation strengthens the credibility of the aims of the study field of law and reinforces their potential to deliver meaningful impact.

Moreover, the goals are crafted to balance ambition with achievability, making them not only visionary but also practical. By specifying objectives such as fostering student competences, achieving national leadership, and creating a sustainable ecosystem, the study field outlines a roadmap for measurable progress. This combination of relevance, clarity, and strategic alignment significantly enhances the study field's potential to contribute meaningfully to the UL mission and to meet the expectations of stakeholders within and beyond the academic community.

The study field provides opportunities to complete all three higher education cycles in law, as defined by the Law on Higher Education Institutions. In the field, the UL Faculty of law ( FL) currently offers six study programmes - 2 programmes at bachelor level, 3 programmes at master level and one doctoral study programme (SAR, p. 18-19). The offer ensures a comprehensive academic and professional pathway, the interconnection of the study programmes included in the study field is clear and logical. The academic bachelor's study programme "Law" (43 380) serves as the foundational programme, equipping students with essential theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of law. After completing the first cycle, students can pursue the professional master's study programme "Law" (47 380), allowing for further specialization and advanced professional competence. Graduates of the second cycle can undertake doctoral studies in the doctoral study programme "Law" (51 380), advancing their expertise through research. Additionally, the academic master's study programme "Law and Governance of Institutions" (45 380) offers an interdisciplinary approach, combining legal knowledge with organizational and managerial skills to create a synergy

of competences across study fields. The study field "Law" also includes specialized "Pre-trial Investigation" programmes (bachelor's (42 380) and master's (47 380)) designed to meet specific professional and societal needs. These programmes form a cohesive set tailored to the objectives of the Internal Security Academy (ISA) consortium, aimed at equipping law enforcement professionals with the necessary qualifications (SAR, p. 18-20).

1.1.2. The SWOT analysis identifies 17 strengths, 4 weaknesses, 8 opportunities, and 9 threats for the study field of "Law" (SAR, p. 22-23). According to the SAR, "the strengths prevail, and in the future, the FL has set a goal to further strengthen and develop the strengths of this study field" (SAR, p. 23). However, a critical review of the SWOT analysis and the implementation of the field of law reveals that the UL FL has not been sufficiently realistic or critical in evaluating its strengths and performing the SWOT.

For instance, the inclusion of a full study cycle in law (bachelor's, master's, doctoral) as a strength is not substantiated - this structure is a standard feature of traditional law faculties and cannot be considered a unique or exceptional characteristic. Without a clear demonstration of exceptional quality in this area, this claim lacks substantive support. Similarly, compliance with occupational standards and regulatory requirements is a baseline expectation for any accredited field of studies, rather than a strength. Meeting such fundamental requirements is a necessity to operate, not an indicator of added value or distinction. While the FL has adequate infrastructure, the presence of deficiencies (see chapter 1.3 of the Joint expert report) limits the validity of claiming "up-to-date information technology infrastructure, rich library resources <...>" as a strength. Additionally, the production of legal literature by teaching staff and the regular publication of the journal "Juridiskā zinātne" cannot be considered a significant strength when generally the volume of publications is not commendable and international recognition is limited (see chapter 1.4 of the Joint expert report). To validate this as a strength, the FL needs to increase the global impact of its research outputs.

The claim of extensive international exchange opportunities for students and staff is also problematic given the low levels of actual mobility (see chapter 1.5 of the Joint expert report). The existence of agreements alone does not qualify as a strength unless backed by substantial evidence of their impact, such as significant participation rates or successful outcomes. This aspect would be better categorized as an opportunity for growth, provided that barriers to mobility, such as funding constraints or low awareness, are addressed. Listing regular updating of programme content as an opportunity is also problematic because this activity is a fundamental requirement for maintaining relevance, competitiveness, and alignment with societal and labour market needs. It is an essential responsibility for any academic programme rather than an additional opportunity for growth or innovation.

The threats identified in the SWOT analysis are largely well-articulated and relevant, addressing critical risks to the development of the study field. However, the analysis could be enhanced by including explicit mitigation strategies. While the FL takes the position that threats "are external and independent of the university's capacities but related to national issues," (SAR, p. 23) this perspective overlooks the proactive measures the faculty could take to address or mitigate these challenges. For example, "employment during studies" (threat No. 9) is not inherently negative. Its impact depends largely on how it is managed and supported by the institution. Indeed, during the assessment visit, the management staff of the field of law highlighted the early employment of students in legal positions as a highly positive factor, reflecting its potential to enhance students' practical skills, employability, and professional networks. With appropriate structures in place, such as flexible schedules, guidance on balancing work and study, this factor could be seen as neutral.

The SAR reports that “drawing on the SWOT analysis, the study field development plan for 2022-2028 has been developed to achieve the goals of the study field, comprising general objectives and more specific tasks to achieve each objective” (SAR, p. 24, Annex 3). However, the plan does not fully address certain identified threats. For example, “employment during studies” is highlighted as a threat in the SWOT but lacks targeted measures in the development plan.

Two subtasks in the plan (Annex 3: “3 Development plan and goals\_eng.docx”) could be loosely associated with this threat: subtask 2.2.1, “to use different forms of study according to students’ needs in the context of learning outcomes to be achieved in the studies” (KPI: 100%), and subtask 5.1.6, “to plan class schedules, considering the possibility of providing a remote study day or remote consultations in the study programme without the need to visit the faculty premises, especially for PTS students” (KPI: progress). However, during the on-site visit, it was revealed that hybrid or online learning is rarely utilized, leaving it unclear how the FL plans to achieve these KPIs. Furthermore, subtask 5.1.6 appears primarily aimed at promoting sustainability by reducing environmental impacts and ensuring resource-efficient infrastructure use, rather than directly addressing the threat of employment during studies. This disconnect raises questions about how effectively the FL addresses the identified threats in practice.

During the assessment visit, the expert group also learned that there is no permanent follow-up mechanism at the central level to monitor how faculties contribute to achieving the UL strategic KPIs. While it is commendable that faculties are given the freedom to develop study field-specific plans, this autonomy must be balanced with accountability and alignment with the university’s overarching strategic KPIs. To ensure faculties contribute effectively, the university needs to establish a centralized system for tracking and evaluating progress on KPIs while allowing faculties to provide relevant, field-specific inputs. Such a centralized system would streamline data collection, enabling comprehensive institutional evaluations without imposing excessive administrative burdens on faculties. It would also ensure that faculties address relevant threats in a timely manner and implement appropriate measures. Achieving this balance between centralization and decentralization would enhance the university’s ability to monitor and support its faculties while ensuring consistent progress toward institutional goals.

1.1.3. The management structure of the study field is assessed and analyzed in the SAR from various perspectives. The UL has established normative and structural procedures that centrally govern the practical implementation and development of the study field. The “Regulations on the Management of the Study Fields at the University of Latvia” set out the rules for managing the study field, ensuring quality assurance, and overseeing its development (SAR, p. 25).

Collegiate responsibility for administering the study field lies with UL's decision-making bodies, including the Senate, the UL Study Programme Quality Assessment Board (headed by Vice-Rectors), Faculty Councils, and Study Programme Councils. These bodies evaluate and oversee study quality, implementing quality assurance measures as needed. The UL governance delegates responsibility for the establishment and functioning of the quality assurance system to the Academic Department, which ensures centralized oversight (SAR, p. 25).

The responsibility for the quality of the study field and its programmes is shared by the head of the study field, the dean, study programme directors, and sub-programme directors. Each study programme at UL has a designated director who oversees its development and implementation. The director is approved by the Senate upon the recommendation of the Faculty Council and works closely with the head of the study field and the Study Field Council. Programme directors are accountable to the dean of the faculty. Meanwhile, the head of the study field is responsible for

overall management and development, reporting to the Study Field Council and the dean, and is appointed by the rector upon the dean's recommendation (SAR, p. 25-26).

Overall, the management structure demonstrates a sufficient level of effectiveness. However, the expert group observes that, in practice, the management and implementation of the study field heavily rely on the dean's office. Both the dean and vice-dean of the FL currently serve as directors of the two major programmes in the study field. The dean also acts as the head of the study field. This double and even triple role (in the case of the dean) creates an excessive workload for the dean's office, hindering its capacity for strategic planning and leading to a micromanagement approach. This structure also results in a lack of proper accountability, as the dean oversees his own decisions. During the assessment visit, the expert group was informed that this arrangement is temporary and linked to the accreditation process. The expert group recommends redistributing programme's and field management responsibilities more evenly across the faculty to alleviate the burden on the dean's office. This redistribution would allow the dean's office to focus on strategic planning and ensure accountability.

The role of programme directors must also be clarified and strengthened to ensure effective programme management and quality assurance. The expert group found that teaching staff is formally accountable to the dean, while heads of departments handle operational responsibilities, such as finding and replacing teaching staff. The programme director, despite being responsible for the programme's success and sustainability, has limited authority in key areas, such as selecting or replacing teaching staff when necessary. This limited capacity undermines the director's ability to fulfill his/her primary responsibilities. Senior management acknowledged being aware of this issue during the on-site visit. The expert group recommends revising the division of competences to empower programme directors, giving them greater autonomy and authority in decision-making critical to programme management. Such changes would enhance the effectiveness of the study field's governance, improve accountability, and support the overall quality and sustainability of the programmes.

The support provided by the administrative and technical staff is sufficient to meet the operational needs of the study programmes within the study field. One or two study programme assistants are assigned to each programme, playing a crucial role in ensuring its smooth organization and implementation. These assistants handle a range of practical tasks, including student registration for programmes and courses, managing the circulation of applications, planning lectures and final examinations, maintaining study-related records, and coordinating other necessary support measures (SAR, p. 28). During the assessment visit, it was observed that the processes and practices in place align with the usual established standards, and there were no deviations from expected procedures. The administrative and technical support appears to function effectively, providing a reliable foundation for the successful delivery of the study programmes.

1.1.4. As demonstrated in the SAR (p. 29-30), the enrolment process at the UL is governed by the Admission Regulations. The requirements and criteria for study programmes are reviewed and updated annually. In compliance with Article 46 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, they are published on the UL's website by November 1.

Admission procedures vary by study level. In the academic bachelor's study programme "Law" and the professional bachelor's study programme "Pre-trial Investigation", admission is based on grades from the centralized examination in Latvian, a foreign language (English, French, or German), mathematics, and history (or social sciences and history). For the professional bachelor's study programme "Pre-trial Investigation", additional specific conditions are imposed on applicants to the

FTS, reflecting the employment requirements of graduates of this programme (SAR, p. 29).

For master's degree programmes, admission is decentralized and managed by each faculty within the same timeframe. Admission to professional master's programmes is based on undergraduate grades. The professional master's study programme "Pre-trial Investigation" is exclusively open to officials of law enforcement institutions (e.g., State Police, Military Police, Prosecutor's Office). The academic master's degree programme "Law and Governance of Institutions" accepts applicants without prior legal education, with an entrance examination designed to assess their background knowledge and professional experience (SAR, p. 30). Overall, the admission procedures are logical and transparent.

The UL provides the opportunity to start studies at later stages of studies following the "Regulations for commencing studies at subsequent stages of studies at the UL". The prerequisite for starting studies at subsequent stages of studies is the crediting and validation of previously acquired study courses or knowledge, skills, competences and learning outcomes acquired outside formal education or in professional experience, which is stipulated by "Regulations on Recognition of Knowledge, Skills, Competences and Learning Outcomes Acquired Outside Formal Education or in Professional Experience and the Referencing of Academic Activity at the UL" and the "Procedure for Recognition of Competencies Developed Outside Formal Education or Through Professional Experience and Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Education" (SAR, p. 30). The recognition process allows students to have study courses from other higher education institutions or earlier periods of study at the UL acknowledged. The Recognition Committee, or the programme director (for students resuming studies in the same programme), assesses and validates the alignment of prior learning outcomes with those of the current programme.

The SAR confirms that this procedure is accessible and effectively implemented, supported by faculty staff. As of October 23, 2023, 46 students across all active study programmes in the field of law have had their study courses recognized (SAR, p. 30). In first- and second-cycle programmes, this process is commonly used when students return from international exchange programmes or resume their studies after interruptions or transfers. In some cases, professional experience is recognized, particularly when it aligns with the internship component of the study programme. Recognition of Part C courses is especially common, with courses like "Civil Protection" and "Environmental Protection and its Legal Aspects" frequently recognized due to their mandatory inclusion in all study programmes since January 2019.

Despite this, the recognition of learning outcomes acquired outside formal education, such as through further education programmes, is relatively rare. Applications for recognition are occasionally submitted for foreign language courses completed in non-formal education settings, but these remain limited (SAR, p. 31). The SAR highlights a clear and functioning recognition system but suggests that the procedures for recognizing non-formal learning outcomes might benefit from a review. This review should focus on increasing accessibility and encouraging greater use of this opportunity by students.

1.1.5. In conformity with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the internal "Procedure for Development and Updating of Study Courses at the University of Latvia" stipulates detailed requirements for study course descriptions. These descriptions must include information on the conditions for commencing the course, its aims and objectives, requirements for earning credit points, study content, organization and tasks of students' independent work, planned learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and competencies), and their respective assessment methods and criteria. All such course descriptions are made accessible to students through the UL Information

System (LUIS) and the UL e-learning environment. The recording and management of students' learning outcomes are conducted in the respective study course e-environment. The learning outcomes for each programme and course are formulated as a coherent set of knowledge, skills, and competencies. Furthermore, courses are designed according to the principles of gradation and succession, ensuring a logical and progressive learning process (SAR, p. 32).

The organization of study course examinations and the assessment of students' achievements is governed by the "Procedure for Organizing Study Course Examinations at the University of Latvia" and the "Regulations for Successful Completion of Study Courses at the UL FL" Each course includes two types of assessments: interim assessments (constituting no less than 50% of the total score) and the final assessment (not less than 10% of the total score). Assessments may be conducted in writing, orally, or in a combined format (SAR, p. 33). Notably, oral examinations are recorded to preserve the right to appeal, ensuring transparency and fairness.

The SAR highlights that "students in the surveys recognise the importance of clearly formulating the results of the studies and defining the evaluation criteria, as well as the regular feedback on student achievements in the study process." To achieve this, the academic staff are expected to systematically analyze their experiences, collaborate with colleagues, and revise course descriptions to refine the articulation of learning outcomes and their evaluation criteria. This process is intended to enhance the justification and transparency of assessments (SAR, p. 35).

However, during the assessment visit, it was observed that there is room for improvement in implementing these practices, particularly regarding individual feedback to students on their evaluations. While the procedures encourage feedback, it was found that teaching staff rarely provide individual feedback unless specifically requested by a student. This gap limits a student's opportunities to understand his / her progress and areas for improvement, which could enhance his / her learning experience. To address this, it is recommended that the university encourages more individual feedback on assessments as part of the evaluation process. This could include providing written or verbal individual feedback automatically after each assessment, along with targeted suggestions for improvement. Such a practice would not only align with students' expectations for regular feedback but also foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

1.1.6. The UL has taken significant steps to promote academic integrity and address the challenges posed by plagiarism and emerging technologies. The UL "Code of Academic Ethics" and the "Regulations for Academic Integrity at the UL" were updated in 2021, demonstrating the institution's commitment to maintaining high ethical standards. In addition, the "Regulations on the Use of Plagiarism Detection Tools and Plagiarism Detection Procedure" were reviewed in 2024, ensuring that the procedures remain current and effective (SAR, p. 36).

The UL employs robust mechanisms for plagiarism detection, including the Turnitin similarity detection tool and the Unified Computerized Control System of Plagiarism. These tools are used to verify the originality of students' study papers, final and doctoral theses, as well as scientific articles and research developed by UL staff. This systematic approach ensures consistency and fairness in the application of academic integrity standards (SAR, p. 36-37).

The UL also identifies itself as a "science university oriented towards an open and innovative study environment where technological innovations, their development, and responsible use in the study process and research are supported." During the assessment visit, the expert group noted an important development in this regard - the "UL Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence", which are publicly available on the UL website but not mentioned in chapter (2.1.6) of the SAR.

These guidelines highlight ethical considerations for using AI in academic work, and recommend appropriate citation of AI tools, whether for direct quotations or paraphrasing, providing clear instructions for referencing AI-generated content. During discussions with students, the expert group was reassured that AI tools are not permitted for use in the development of research papers referring to the UL's guidelines, however, contrary to the established guidelines.

Considering the strategic vision of the UL as an institution committed to innovation and technological advancement, the UL FL should take active measures to ensure that students and teaching staff are properly informed about the ethical use of AI tools and the UL guidelines. During the assessment visit the group of experts learned that at least two training sessions were organized for teaching staff over the past year, but there is a clear need to expand these efforts to include students. A broader educational initiative on the ethical use of AI, plagiarism detection tools, and academic integrity should be implemented to foster a deeper understanding of these issues across the university.

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

The UL exhibits notable strengths in aligning its academic offerings with societal needs and maintaining high standards of academic integrity. Through timely and relevant programmes, the university demonstrates its commitment to contributing to national economic development and responding to societal trends. Furthermore, the deployment of advanced plagiarism detection systems, including Turnitin and the Unified Computerized Control System of Plagiarism, underscores UL's dedication to upholding academic ethics and integrity.

However, despite these strengths, several weaknesses hinder the university's operational efficiency and effectiveness, particularly within the FL. The SWOT analysis conducted by the faculty lacks sufficient depth and critical evaluation, limiting its value as a tool for informed decision-making and strategic planning. Governance challenges also emerge, with the dean assuming multiple roles that lead to excessive workload, micromanagement, and inadequate accountability. In programme management, directors face significant limitations in their authority, particularly in key areas such as selecting or replacing teaching staff. This restriction undermines their ability to manage programmes effectively and ensure their long-term success and sustainability. Feedback mechanisms, although encouraged, are inconsistently applied, with teaching staff seldom providing individual feedback to students unless explicitly requested. This limits students' ability to understand their progress, identify areas for improvement, and maximize their learning outcomes. Moreover, despite clear guidelines allowing the use of AI for research paper development, inconsistent awareness and adherence to these guidelines create discrepancies.

Strengths:

- 1) The UL effectively aligns its programmes with societal and economic needs by offering timely and relevant programmes, such as "pre-trial investigation".
- 2) Robust plagiarism detection systems are in place, including the Turnitin similarity detection tool and the Unified Computerized Control System of Plagiarism, ensuring academic integrity across all faculties.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The SWOT analysis conducted by the FL lacks sufficient realism and criticality, undermining its value as a strategic tool.
- 2) The dean's triple role creates excessive workload, reducing capacity for strategic planning, promoting micromanagement, and causing accountability concerns.
- 3) Programmes directors have limited authority in key areas such as teaching staff selection or replacement, which constrains their ability to manage programmes effectively.
- 4) While feedback procedures are encouraged, teaching staff rarely provide individual feedback unless requested by students, limiting opportunities for students to track progress and identify areas for improvement.
- 5) Despite guidelines allowing the use of AI tools in research paper preparation, there is inconsistency in their application, highlighting a need for greater awareness and adherence to ethical standards.

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

### **Analysis**

1.2.1. The UL FL has implemented a robust and publicly accessible Quality Assurance System (QAS) that adheres to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015). The QAS is grounded in institutional regulatory documents such as the Quality Management Manual (QMM) and supports continuous improvement through regular evaluations of study programmes (SAR, p. 38-39). These evaluations ensure alignment with institutional objectives and stakeholder needs.

While the QAS is both operational and well-structured, there is room for improvement in the transparency and communication of feedback and evaluation outcomes. The process for converting feedback into actionable changes is not fully transparent, which may hinder stakeholder trust and engagement. Clearer documentation linking feedback to specific implemented changes, as well as enhanced communication of these outcomes to stakeholders, would address this issue. These improvements could be achieved through publicly available updates in annual reports, newsletters, or dedicated stakeholder meetings. Such measures would demonstrate responsiveness and reinforce the institution's commitment to a participatory and effective quality assurance process (more details in chapter 1.2.2 of the Joint expert report).

1.2.2. The development and review processes of study programmes within the UL FL are structured, systematic, and guided by established institutional frameworks such as the QMM. These processes aim to ensure the ongoing relevance of study programmes, aligning them with the institution's strategic goals, regulatory requirements, and the evolving needs of stakeholders (SAR, p. 47 - 48). The SAR affirms that the mechanisms in place support logical programme design, regular updates, and alignment with legal and professional standards.

Student feedback plays a crucial role in programme evaluation. Mandatory surveys conducted at the conclusion of each course collect detailed information on teaching quality, course relevance, and workload. These surveys ensure comprehensive participation and provide a consistent dataset for analysis. The Development Department aggregates and analyzes this data, forwarding insights to

programme directors and faculty leadership for further action (SAR, p. 47 - 48). However, during the assessment visit, students expressed concerns about the limited visibility of actions taken based on their feedback. In particular, conflicting inputs - such as divergent opinions on the workload or the adequacy of course content - are not consistently reconciled or transparently communicated. This lack of transparency may diminish student confidence in the feedback process. Implementing structured mechanisms for resolving conflicts in feedback and ensuring timely communication of decisions to students could address this issue and reinforce trust.

Employer and graduate feedback mechanisms are also integral to the programmes review process. Employers provide valuable insights through advisory boards and collaborative discussions. Their contributions have influenced curriculum revisions, including the addition of emerging topics such as legal technology and data protection (SAR, p. 47). However, the integration of employer feedback across all programmes is inconsistent, often hindered by logistical challenges or limited resources. For instance, suggestions related to expanding practical training or internships are not always fully implemented, leaving gaps in addressing the professional readiness of students. Developing a formalized and transparent system for prioritizing and tracking employer feedback would ensure that valuable insights are systematically integrated into programme improvements.

Graduate feedback is gathered through surveys and consultations, focusing on the alignment of programme outcomes with professional demands (SAR, p. 47-48). During the assessment visit, alumni highlighted the practical relevance of skills acquired during their studies. Their input has contributed to specific updates, such as increasing the applied components of the curriculum (e.g., practical exercises, case studies, and interactive learning activities). Despite these efforts, the process for documenting and communicating how graduate feedback informs programmes development could be strengthened. Enhanced communication and reporting mechanisms would foster stronger engagement and trust among alumni while demonstrating the faculty's commitment to continuous improvement.

To strengthen the programmes review process, the UL FL could benefit from establishing clearer and more formal procedures for incorporating stakeholder feedback. Better documentation and communication of how feedback is used would increase transparency, while carefully reviewing and addressing employer and graduate input could improve the relevance and adaptability of study programmes to meet professional and industry needs.

1.2.3. The UL FL has established a comprehensive and accessible mechanism for students to submit complaints and suggestions, which is integrated into the Quality Assurance System (QAS). This mechanism is supported by institutional regulations and is communicated through multiple channels, including orientation sessions, the faculty website, and student handbooks (SAR, p. 43). These efforts ensure that students are aware of their rights and avenues for raising concerns or making suggestions.

During the assessment visit, students confirmed that they are encouraged to share their concerns through both formal and informal channels. Formal mechanisms include written submissions to faculty administration and responses collected through mandatory end-of-course surveys. Informal pathways, such as direct communication with academic staff or programmes directors, also facilitate open dialogue and foster a culture of accessibility and trust. Students highlighted instances where their complaints resulted in tangible changes, such as adjustments to course schedules and exam formats, demonstrating the FL responsiveness to their concerns.

However, certain areas for improvement were identified. Students reported that while many

complaints are addressed, the process often lacks transparency. There is limited communication about the status of submitted complaints or the rationale behind specific decisions. For example, students are not consistently informed about the outcomes of their complaints, leading to perceptions of inaction even when corrective measures have been implemented. Moreover, the lack of systematic tracking for complaints and resolutions may result in inefficiencies and missed opportunities to identify recurring issues or trends.

To enhance the effectiveness of the complaints mechanism, the faculty should consider implementing a formal tracking and reporting system. An online portal that allows students to monitor the status of their submissions could improve transparency and build trust in the system. Additionally, providing periodic updates to the student body on common complaints and the actions taken to address them would reinforce confidence in the FL commitment to continuous improvement. Formalizing these processes would not only ensure greater accountability but also position the faculty as a responsive and student-centered institution.

1.2.4. The UL FL employs a statistical data collection mechanism that tracks key performance indicators, such as student enrollment, dropout rates, graduate employment, and stakeholder feedback (SAR, p. 47–48; Annexes 16 of study programmes). This data informs programme adjustments and strategic decisions, ensuring that study programmes remain aligned with labour market demands and institutional goals.

While data collection is systematic, the mechanism lacks efficiency. For instance, key data and documents necessary for an evidence-based assessment of the fulfillment of a number of the analyzed criteria related to teaching staff displays significant discrepancies (see chapter 1.4 of the Joint expert report). The data collection system for tracking key aspects of scientific/applied research and teaching staff is not automated, but produced manually. Additionally, the lack of advanced analytics to anticipate trends and preempt challenges limits the mechanism's strategic potential. For instance, while drop-out data is used to identify and address specific challenges, integrating predictive analytics could enhance the ability to design proactive interventions. Furthermore, establishing a centralized system to track feedback resolutions and outcomes would improve transparency and demonstrate the tangible impact of stakeholder contributions. As noted in previous chapters, the lack of consistent communication on the implementation of feedback affects stakeholder confidence in the process, making it important to address this gap in the feedback cycle.

1.2.5. The UL FL's website provides accurate and comprehensive information about its study programmes, aligning with official registers such as VIIS and the E-platform. Programme descriptions, learning outcomes, admission criteria, and professional qualifications are clearly outlined and available in all relevant languages, facilitating accessibility for both local and international applicants. While this establishes a strong foundation, integrating a dedicated chapter on the faculty's QAS, including examples of recent programme improvements informed by stakeholder feedback, would offer greater transparency. Additionally, periodic updates highlighting how survey results or employer consultations have shaped programme development could further engage prospective and current students, demonstrating the tangible value of stakeholder contributions.

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

The UL FL demonstrates a well-established framework for quality assurance that adheres to

institutional, national, and European standards. QAS effectively supports the development, implementation, and continuous improvement of its study programmes. Mechanisms for gathering and analyzing feedback from diverse stakeholders - students, graduates, and employers - are in place, and data-driven decisions are made to enhance programme relevance and alignment with professional and societal needs.

However, certain limitations were identified. While feedback mechanisms are functional and well-structured, there is a lack of transparency in how feedback is resolved and communicated to stakeholders, creating gaps in trust and engagement. Similarly, the integration of employer suggestions, particularly regarding internships and practical training, requires further systematization to ensure consistency across programmes. Additionally, the statistical data collection mechanisms, although comprehensive, could be enhanced by incorporating predictive analytics to improve strategic decision-making. Finally, while the faculty's website meets core informational requirements, the inclusion of quality assurance processes and stakeholder-driven improvements would further enhance transparency and trust.

#### Strengths:

- 1) A well-defined QAS aligned with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015) facilitates systematic programme evaluation and ensures compliance with institutional and international standards.
- 2) Mandatory end-of-course surveys provide comprehensive and consistent student feedback, enabling actionable improvements in teaching quality, workload balance, and course relevance.
- 3) Employer and graduate feedback mechanisms have led to practical curriculum enhancements, such as the addition of legal technology and data protection courses, ensuring programmes meet evolving professional demands.
- 4) Demonstrated responsiveness to student complaints, with implemented changes in areas such as course scheduling and assessment formats.

#### Weaknesses:

- 1) Insufficient transparency in addressing and communicating resolutions to feedback and complaints, which may create a perception of inefficiency or lack of responsiveness among stakeholders.
- 2) Limited systematic integration of employer feedback into programme development, particularly concerning practical training and internships, due to logistical challenges and resource constraints.
- 3) Inadequate documentation and dissemination of how graduate feedback is utilized to refine programmes, potentially missing opportunities to align more closely with evolving professional requirements.
- 4) Absence of advanced analytical tools in data collection processes, restricting the ability to implement predictive strategies for proactive programme adjustments and long-term planning.
- 5) Key data and documents necessary for an evidence-based assessment of the fulfillment of a

number of the analyzed criteria by the UL FL display significant discrepancies.

6) The FL website provides limited information on the QAS and lacks visibility into stakeholder-driven enhancements and feedback outcomes, which diminishes transparency and stakeholder engagement.

## **Assessment of the requirement [1]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The assessment is based on the analysis provided for criteria 1.2.1-1.2.6, which indicate that UL FL has established a robust and systematic quality assurance system that aligns with institutional goals and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. Key strengths include the comprehensive mechanisms for collecting and analyzing stakeholder feedback, such as student surveys and employer consultations, and the regular use of this data to inform programme adjustments and strategic decisions. The effective integration of feedback processes and the accessibility of survey results to relevant stakeholders further demonstrate the faculty's commitment to transparency and continuous improvement. Insights from the assessment visit confirmed these strengths, highlighting UL FL's proactive approach to maintaining and enhancing quality in the study field. Based on these considerations, the assessment concludes that the criteria are fully compliant, however key data and documents necessary for an evidence-based assessment of the fulfillment of a number of the analyzed criteria by the UL FL display significant discrepancies.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The UL FL has implemented a clear policy and procedures for quality assurance, aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015) and institutional documents like the Quality Management Manual. These procedures ensure regular programme evaluations and stakeholder engagement to maintain and improve study quality. While the system is effective, enhanced transparency in feedback resolution and systematic documentation of improvements would further strengthen its impact.

- 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

The UL FL has established a robust mechanism for the development, approval, and periodic review of study programmes. This process incorporates structured feedback from students, employers, and graduates, ensuring that programmes remain relevant and aligned with professional and academic standards. While the mechanism is effective, improvements in the transparency of feedback utilization and systematic integration of employer recommendations could enhance its impact.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The UL FL has established clear and publicly accessible criteria, conditions, and procedures for evaluating students' results. These processes ensure alignment with intended learning outcomes and academic standards. Assessment methods, including examinations and coursework, are consistently applied and regularly reviewed.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The UL FL has implemented robust internal procedures to ensure the qualifications and work quality of academic staff. Recruitment processes follow institutional and national standards, and periodic evaluations assess teaching and research performance. Faculty development opportunities, such as training and participation in academic projects, are actively supported.

- 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:** Partially compliant

The UL FL systematically collects and analyzes data on student achievements, graduate employment, student satisfaction, and resource allocation. This data informs decision-making processes and programme improvements, ensuring alignment with institutional goals and stakeholder needs. Key data and documents necessary for an evidence-based assessment of the fulfillment of a number of the analyzed criteria by the UL FL display significant discrepancies (see 1.2.4. chapter of the expert report).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The UL FL implements a comprehensive Quality Assurance System (QAS) aligned with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015), ensuring continuous improvement and development of the study field. Regular evaluations, stakeholder feedback integration, and systematic monitoring of programme performance contribute to maintaining high standards and addressing areas for enhancement. Identified weaknesses, such as communication of feedback resolutions and integration of employer input, are primarily for improvement purposes and do not undermine overall compliance.

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

#### **Analysis**

1.3.1. The UL has established a system for determining and redistributing the financial support required for the implementation of the study field and the corresponding six study programmes.

According to the SAR, the UL uses the state budget subsidy (taking into account the base funding,

programme level and study field) from the Ministry of Education and Science and tuition fees (SAR, p. 52)

As it was clarified during the assessment visit, the two new Bachelor and Master level "Pre-trial investigation" study programmes are provided with separate additional funding from the Ministry of the Interior.

Tuition fees are determined based on (SAR, p. 51):

- 1) study place cost, including all the costs of the study process;
- 2) tuition fees for similar programmes at other universities
- 3) potential fee-paying students' interest in the programme;
- 4) estimated state funding allocated per study place;
- 5) UL Student Council opinion.

The main costs related to the implementation of the study process are: 1) the remuneration of teaching staff and 2) the costs related to the organisation of the study process.

Teaching staff remuneration includes: cost of contact hours (lectures, seminars, practical and laboratory work), costs of supervising students' independent work, tutorials and examinations, costs of methodological work (preparing for classes, preparing new courses), costs of supervising and assessing student work, including reviewing, costs of running and organising the internships, costs of research work by teaching staff to ensure the development of new study materials. The UL Rector has established normative norms for the remuneration of teaching staff for the entire University Normative norms for planning and accounting of the workload of academic staff (approved by the UL Order No.1/469 of 07.12.2016) (SAR, p. 50).

Costs related to the organisation of the study process are: general staff costs, other direct costs related to the study programmes, infrastructure costs, costs for goods and services, and other indirect costs. To estimate the amount of funds required for financial support, the UL calculates the cost price for each study programme according to the methodology developed by the UL, which takes into account all the costs described above and information on the specific study programme plan, the teaching staff involved, the planned number of students, etc., thus ensuring the reliability of the forecasts (SAR, p. 50)

Faculties manage their own funding within the current year's budget. The dean of the FL and the Executive Director are responsible for the rational use of financial resources and for operational financial management (SAR, p. 51).

The management of the FL monitors the results of the study process, the dynamics of the number of students and the factors influencing it, the balance of the cost of a particular programme with the state budget subsidy and tuition fees and, if necessary, makes the necessary adjustments in the organisation of the study process in order to ensure the long-term viability and development of the faculty's study field (SAR, p. 51).

With reference to scientific/applied research, the UL's funding system heavily relies on covering the costs of research work conducted by teaching staff (which is aimed to ensure the development of new study materials) through teaching staff remuneration (SAR, chapter 2.3.1.). Besides said system of funding scientific/applied research through the teaching staff remuneration, the UL indirectly allocates research funding sources for academic staff through funds for the development of study programmes, thereby covering costs of e.g. research activities, participation in international projects, publication of scientific articles, preparation of international project applications,

organization of scientific events at the UL, implementation of research activities, development of projects and long-term commitments (SAR, chapter 2.3.1.). Both these systems for funding scientific/applied research (directly through teaching staff remuneration, and indirectly through funding the development of study programmes) are defined in the relevant regulatory frameworks as well as the strategic documents.

Whether and to which extent these funding systems are effective needs to be assessed in light of scientific/applied research results of the UL FL, which measures scientific/applied research results by counting publications (categorized as 1. International scientific publications indexed to Scopus and/or Web of Science databases; 2. International scientific publications indexed to Erih+ and/or Ebsco databases; 3. International scientific publications not indexed to databases; 4. Scientific publications at national level; 5. Popular-science publications), participation in scientific conferences with a paper (categorized as 1. international and 2. national conferences), and participation in scientific projects (categorized as 1. international and 2. national) - as provided in Annex 8. The UL FL also collects bibliographic information about its teaching staff's publications - as provided in Annex 9. In terms of assessing the UL FL funding system's efficiency neither the UL, nor the UL FL provides (or seem to systematically collect) data about actual funds allocated for any of the measured indicators of scientific/applied research (e.g. conference participation or publishing).

The UL and UL FL have two main systems for funding scientific/applied research: directly through teaching staff remuneration, and indirectly through funding the development of study programmes. Whether or not these systems are effective is challenging to assess, since crucial data for such an assessment is not available and does not seem to be collected systematically by UL or UL FL (e.g. funded conference participations or funded publications of teaching staff). This is likely a consequence of how both funding systems (direct and indirect) are designed, as this essentially makes the funding of scientific/applied research difficult to trace down, since it is contained within other major funding sources (teaching staff remuneration and development of study programmes).

When however assessing the efficiency of the two funding systems for scientific/applied research in light of scientific/applied research results of the UL FL, which measures scientific/applied research results by counting its teaching staff's publications, teaching staff's participation in scientific conferences and teaching staff's participation in scientific projects, as provided in Annex 8, then neither the direct, nor the indirect funding system seem to be highly efficient.

When all UL FL teaching staff (Annex 6: "6 Teaching staff 2024.xlsx") is put in ratio to the number of all conference participations throughout the 5 year reporting period 2019-2024 (Annex 8: "8\_Scientific\_research\_Artistic\_creation.docx", row 2), then we see that teaching staff participates in approx. 1 international or national scientific conference annually.

Similarly, when all UL FL teaching staff (Annex 6) is put in ratio to the number of all types of scientific publications throughout the 5 year reporting period 2019-2024 (Annex 8, row 1), then we see that teaching staff publishes approx. 1,5 scientific publications annually, whereby the main type of publications are "popular-science publications" (37%), followed by "scientific publications at national level" (23%), "international scientific publications not indexed to databases" (18%), "international scientific publications indexed to Scopus and/or Web of Science databases" (16%) and "international scientific publications indexed to ERIH+ and/or EBSCO databases" (6%).

Looking however only at the ratio of scientific publications throughout the 5 year reporting period 2019-2024 (Annex 8, row 1, excluding the popular-science publications in row 1.6.) the expert group observes that the teaching staff publishes less than 1 scientific publication annually.

When focusing on teaching staff's participation in international and national scientific projects (Annex 8, row 3), the expert group notices that the UL FL teaching staff only exceptionally participates in scientific projects.

There is however no actual funding data available that would enable an evidence-based assessment of whether and how the said scientific/applied research results as measured by UL FL are a consequence of or even related to the UL or the UL FL direct or indirect research funding systems' efficiency or a lack thereof. If such data were available or would be collected in the future, then one could make an assessment of whether and how an increase/decrease in direct/indirect research funding impacts scientific/applied research results of the teaching staff.

The discussions held with teaching staff and UL FL management did clearly show that funding for scientific/applied research is generally available to teaching staff, both in terms of the direct and indirect funding system. This however does not seem to be the result of a systematic research funding approach, but rather daily implementation of good practice in supporting interested teaching staff in their scientific/applied research activities.

From a methodological point of view it needs to be stressed that the data provided with regards quantitative scientific/applied research results (Annex 8) shows significant discrepancies with regards to qualitative scientific/applied research results (Annex 9), whereby the qualitative scientific/applied research results (Annex 9) also display significant discrepancies with regards to UL FL teaching staff (Annex 6) - please refer to chapter 1.4. for a more detailed analysis of the said discrepancies and their impact on the assessment.

1.3.2. The infrastructure resources and material and technical support necessary for the implementation of the study field Law have been identified in the UL and they are at the disposal of UL.

The financial resources of the study field "Law" are mainly derived from tuition fees, as the state budget funds account for only a small part of the total available funding for the implementation of the study field (10% after UL deductions) (SAR, p. 52).

The premises are adequate for the study process, although they are in need of renovation. Notably, the windows are in a deteriorated condition. However, it was confirmed during the meeting that their replacement is planned in the near future. It is also planned to renovate the entire building in about three years, during which the FL will be offered other temporary premises.

At the moment the total floor space and the number of student workplaces are close to optimal. The number of student workplaces in classrooms, seminar rooms is 850 (SAR, p. 52). The rational organisation of the lecture schedule ensures that the space and number of student workplaces are sufficient.

If necessary, it is also possible to schedule classes in the auditoriums of other UL faculties (in the nearby Aspazijas Boulevard 5 or in the premises of the Faculty of Computer Science at Raiņa Boulevard 19) (SAR, p. 52).

A wireless computer network is available in all FL premises and is used intensively, as most students use personal laptops. All classrooms are equipped with laptops, video projectors, projection screens and internet access, so that teaching staff can use audio-visual aids in their study courses (SAR, p. 52).

Students and teaching staff have access to the Faculty of Law Library at 19 Raina Boulevard, where the literature necessary for the study of law is concentrated. Students and teaching staff can also visit and place orders at other branches of the UL Library.

The silent reading room has a rich collection of ancient and rare books in the field of law.

Several vending machines for drinks and snacks have been installed in the UL building at 19 Raina Boulevard, where the FL is located (SAR, p. 52). However, different groups of interests expressed disappointment over the absence of a canteen or cafeteria on the premises of UL. As was explained by UL management, the canteen stopped working during the Covid crisis. Attempts to attract another caterer have so far been unsuccessful, as the building is old and opening a canteen requires large investments, and no one wants to make an investment knowing that the building will be renovated in the next few years.

Resources are available to students and teaching staff of the FL. A unified system and procedures have been established for the improvement and purchase of material, methodological, informative, etc. provision.

The available funding allows for regular and planned maintenance and modernisation of the technical equipment in line with technological developments and changes in the content of studies, to cover running costs and to partially upgrade the computer and video projection equipment.

It is stated in the SAR that there is no need to use specific equipment for the implementation of the given study field (SAR, p. 52). In the opinion of the expert group, the new "Pre-trial investigation" programmes, however, require specific equipment, for example, for conducting investigative experiments or forensic training.

Additionally, the infrastructure is not equipped with students with special needs, including disabilities. Although some individual needs have been addressed directly by the FL staff, a more systematic approach is highly recommended. In the long term, it is advisable to adapt learning facilities for accessibility and develop specific policies and procedures for reporting and addressing different types of special needs. This will ensure that all students, regardless of their physical capabilities, have equal access to educational opportunities and support services.

1.3.3. The UL has developed a system for the improvement and purchase of methodological and informative provision.

The UL Library acquires information resources on the request of the UL academic staff, on the proposal of the students' self-government or on the proposal of the UL Library staff, which are approved by the dean of the FL or the Executive Director.

During the assessment visit, it was found out that once a year, the FL sends questions to lecturers about whether and what new books or electronic resources should be purchased. A general list of purchasable resources is drawn up, and they are purchased (according to financial possibilities).

The library's collection of printed publications is generally sufficient for the implementation of studies and the development of scientific research, as it is updated each year with the most up-to-date information resources in accordance with the information needs of academic staff and students. However, during the visit, the library shelves were quite empty, which was explained by the active learning process, as students have taken out many books. However, during the meeting,

it was found out that books are sometimes missing in the general study courses, which are studied by many students. It should be noted that not all the latest books were available in the library. The expert group also did not see any books specifically intended for the study specifics of the two new Bachelor and Master level study programmes "Pre-trial investigation".

According to the SAR (p. 54) in 2023, 1.8 million items of information resources were made available to the users of the UL Library. Consistent with the UL study and research infrastructure, the collection of the UL Library is housed in 8 branch libraries and the Repository. A total of 45 e-resource platforms (e-book platforms, e-journal databases and separately purchased e-journals, reference resources and tools, and mixed-format databases) were available at the UL in 2023. The collection of the UL Library with information resources corresponding to the UL study programme "Law" as of 10 October 2023 includes 8958 titles in 34361 copies (SAR, p. 55).

Thus while Library resources and databases are available to students and generally meet the needs of the study field Law, improvements are needed to address shortages in general study course materials, ensure the availability of the latest publications, and provide resources specifically aligned with the "Pre-trial Investigation" study programmes to better meet the needs of all students.

The opening hours of the branch libraries are tailored to the convenience of users. Weekdays 9.00 – 20.00, in some branch libraries: 9.00 – 18.00, Saturdays – 9.00 – 17.00 The House of Science Library and the House of Nature Library are available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. The three branch libraries are open all year round, including summer (SAR, p. 53).

1.3.4. The information and communication technology solutions used to ensure the study process are appropriate and effective.

As indicated in the SAR, two e-learning environments are available at the UL – [estudijas.lu.lv](http://estudijas.lu.lv) and [edu.lu.lv](http://edu.lu.lv). Both e-learning environments use the open source e-learning environment MOODLE, which is the most cost-effective e-learning solution.

Moodle e-learning environment hosts courses where students have access to the necessary study materials and activities. Teaching staff can assess students and record their attendance (SAR, p. 61).

During the visit, this platform was demonstrated. It was explained that UL also uses another system (LUIS) for the preparation of the diploma, but it is not visible to the students. According to the SAR (1.4.) information on students' grades is accumulated in the information system LUIS.

According to the SAR (p. 61), the study field Law does not use specific information and communication technology solutions.

Studies are not conducted in the form of distance learning.

1.3.5. The UL FL has defined procedures for attracting qualified teaching staff based on national law (Law on Higher Education; Law on Higher Educational Institutions) and the relevant UL regulatory framework (Regulations on Academic and Administrative Positions at the University of Latvia; Regulations of the UL Council of Professors; Procedures for recruitment of non-elected teaching and research staff at the University of Latvia), whereby 3 main groups of teaching staff are distinguished at the UL: teaching staff working in elected academic positions (professor, associate professor, assistant professor, senior researcher, lecturer, researcher, assistant, research assistant), teaching

staff working as acting elected academic positions (acting and visiting academics), and hourly paid contract staff. There is a clear and transparent procedure of announcing open positions and conducting elections, whereby positions are broadly announced in national as well as English language. The UL FL seems to have implemented and followed said procedures (as far as can be assessed based on the information provided in Annex 6 and Annex 7, while keeping in mind the detected discrepancies with regards to the teaching staff as listed in the study course descriptions for all the 6 study programmes - in more detail please see chapter 1.4. below) and the strong involvement of stakeholders (both expert practitioners and former students) in their teaching staff documents that UL FL well-informs them about open positions.

There is no data available about the distribution of UL FL teaching staff into one of the 3 main groups of teaching staff which are distinguished at the UL (teaching staff working in elected academic positions, teaching staff working as acting elected academic positions, and hourly paid contract staff) - the only distinguishing feature of the teaching staff (Annex 6) is their status of election in the UL (yes/no), but no information about the hourly paid teaching staff is provided (SAR, chapter 2.3.5. notes that "with the launch of the two licensed study programmes "Pre-Trial Investigation" in 2023/2024, a number of new teaching staff have been recruited, mostly as hourly-paid faculty members).

1.3.6. The SAR (chapter 2.3.6.) clearly demonstrates that professional and didactic development of the teaching staff are set very high on the priority list of UL and UL FL with numerous interconnected measures and incentives being offered and implemented to meaningfully address the relevant needs of teaching staff, with particular focus on junior teaching staff. With regards to didactic development the UL as well as the UL FL use numerous measures to ensure and continuously improve teaching staff's knowledge, skills and competences needed to successfully conduct higher education teaching on a qualitatively high level. The areas covered range from didactics and methodology, presentation and rhetorical competences all the way to academic integrity by providing training for use of plagiarism detection tools.

UL FL in 2020 and 2021 implemented a series of specific measures targeting professional development of its teaching staff specifically related to higher education teaching (stress-management, online learning and digitalisation of learning content, intergenerational communication and distance learning). The main focus of professional development is however not specifically related to didactical skills, but rather legal practice, which makes sense and reflects the high importance of legal practice in the domain of legal education, especially when taking into consideration that as a rule UL FL teaching staff is predominantly composed of legal professionals, many of whom are not mainly employed at UL FL, but work in legal/government practice.

The UL FL thus pays specific attention to continuously evaluating its teaching staff's professional development for which detailed data has been provided (SAR, chapter 2.3.6., table 2.3.6.1.). In terms of assessment and evaluation said data does however show that University didactics (training) or Language proficiency building has not been the main source of obtaining/increasing didactical/language skills. This might indicate that UL FL teaching staff is already highly didactically/linguistically skilled, which would correspond to the very strict conditions that are in place for the election of teaching staff at the UL. Such an assessment is confirmed by the overwhelmingly very positive results of the student surveys (for 4 out of 6 study programmes these are available throughout the reporting period, whereas for the 2 "Pre-Trial Investigation" study programmes these have not yet been conducted), which demonstrate no negative feedback about didactical skills of the teaching staff, whereby the teaching staff's high level of professional skills, competences and expert (practical) knowledge is consistently and strongly positively highlighted in

student evaluations. Again, the detected discrepancies in the data/documentation (please see in more detail chapter 1.4.) with regards to the UL FL, particularly when the SAR in chapter 2.3.6. specifically refers to the teaching staff's CVs in Annex 7 as a detailed reflection of individual career development activities, undermine a fully conclusive evidence-based assessment, but there is also nothing contained in the data/documentation that would justify an assessment that UL FL with regards to this criteria is not compliant, especially due to the very positive student surveys and the very strict election procedures at UL.

1.3.7. The SAR (chapter 2.3.7.) finds the academic and administrative workload of the teaching staff to be balanced, but unfortunately systematic quantitative data that would allow for an evidence-based assessment in this regard has not been provided (e.g. overall teaching workload per staff, overall administrative workload per staff or overall research workload per staff). There is also no data/information about the actual research workload per academic staff, making it impossible to assess whether teaching, administration and research are distributed in a balanced way on the individual and hence the overall UL FL teaching staff level. Nevertheless, the impressions from the assessment visit, especially the discussions with the different groups of teaching staff did not indicate that there is an imbalance among the present teaching staff with regards to their academic, research and administrative workload.

The UL FL teaching staff is indeed very diverse in its composition when it comes to the teaching/academic workload (reflected in the number of study courses they teach), as well as its research workload (at least when the research workload is assessed by number of published scientific publications) or administrative workload (presumably highest for UL FL management and heads of study programmes, departments etc.).

Since the workload of the teaching staff at UL FL is planned annually for each academic year and heavily depends on whether and how busy the teaching staff is with work outside the UL (SAR, chapter 2.3.7.), there might be high levels of uncertainty and unforeseeability coupled with a high administrative workload on the side of the UL FL management when it comes to settling the teaching staff's workload for each academic year. This could also partially explain the detected significant discrepancies in the data/information and documents (see in more detail chapter 1.4.), as they might reflect frequent changes in teaching staff and/or teaching workload/engagements which are seemingly impossible to administratively keep track of in an up-to-date manner - at least if collected manually and not supported by an automated data management system.

There is no doubt that by increasing the share of UL FL teaching staff whose principle employment is at the UL FL would ensure a more balanced workload distribution among the teaching staff, since they would not need to prioritize their workload outside the UL FL compared to their UL FL workload and could thus also more vigorously focus on research work. Again, the available data/documentation discrepancies and the lack of data/information about the different types of workload essentially undermines an evidence-based and fully conclusive assessment of this criteria.

1.3.8. The UL has identified the necessary support for students (for Erasmus students, part-time students, students with special needs, etc.) and a functioning support system has been established to meet the needs of students.

The UL students have access to academic support, career development support and psychological support (SAR, p. 69-70):

1) academic support in academic matters is managed centrally by the UL Department of Study

Services and the responsible persons with the respective faculties: director of the study programme, study advisor, trustee, mentor, coordinator, academic staff, and the UL Students' Council and Faculty Students' Councils.

2) career development support is provided by the Career Centre of the UL Department of Study Services in cooperation with the faculties

3) psychological support is provided by the Department of Study Services.

Special events aimed at integrating domestic and international students are organised in cooperation with the ESN (Erasmus student network), thus introducing international students to Latvian culture and traditions and promoting international and national student interactions (SAR, p. 72).

The assessment of infrastructure accessibility for persons with disabilities has been conducted in cooperation with Apeirons (SAR, p. 72).

FL supports and encourages students' participation in international moot courts (SAR, p. 73).

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

The UL FL excels with very good access to e-resources and databases, enabling quality learning and research. It boasts experienced teaching staff, successfully recruiting top legal professionals and alumni as educators. A robust funding system supports research through conference financing and publication rewards, while transparent recruitment and professional development ensure high academic standards.

However, the faculty faces several challenges. A lack of specialized facilities and equipment limits the potential of the "Pre-trial Investigation" programme, and inadequate infrastructure for students with disabilities hampers inclusivity. The absence of a canteen or café in the premises inconveniences both students and staff, potentially affecting their focus and productivity. Additionally, a limited proportion of teaching staff employed full-time at UL FL contributes to an imbalanced workload between teaching, research, and administrative duties. Moreover, insufficient data prevents an evidence-based assessment of the research funding system's efficiency, highlighting the need for better monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Strengths:

1) Very good availability of various e-resources, databases, news outlets and software packages.

2) Qualified academic staff with significant experience in teaching.

3) A clearly defined direct and indirect funding system for scientific/applied research that enables and incentivizes the research of UL FL teaching staff (especially by funding conference participations and remunerating teaching staff for scientific publications) is set up and implemented at the UL and the UL FL.

4) Sufficient number and accessibility of learning resources.

5) The UL and UL FL is open and transparent in attracting qualified teaching staff, while setting high

criteria and democratic procedures for academic elections, ensuring that highest academic elections (associate professor and professor) are reserved for highly qualified candidates.

6) The UL FL is particularly successful in recruiting top-professionals from legal practice as well as former students as teaching staff.

7) The UL and the UL FL systematically improve and evaluate didactical and professional development of the teaching staff.

8) The UL FL recognises that in the long term it is important to increase the share of teaching staff that is principally employed at the UL FL.

Weaknesses:

1) The UL does not have specific facilities and equipment to provide new "Pre-trial investigation" programmes for conducting investigative experiments or forensic training.

2) There is an evident lack of data necessary for an evidence-based assessment of the UL FL research funding systems' efficiency.

3) The share of teaching staff that is principally employed at the UL FL seemingly hinders optimal workload balance between academic/teaching work, research and administration.

4) There is neither a canteen nor a cafe in the premises of UL at Raina boulevard 19, which can prevent both students and academic staff from fully devoting time to the study process.

5) The facilities are not equipped to accommodate students with disabilities and other special needs.

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

### **Analysis**

1.4.1. The directions of scientific/applied research at the UL FL and within the study field "Law" are meaningfully divided in 5 sub-fields of law: civil law, criminal law, national law, international and European Union law, as well as legal theory and history, which is institutionally reflected in the according division of the UL FL into the same 5 departments. The UL FL correctly identifies law as a fundamental prerequisite for the functioning of a democratic state. The UL FL further identifies that the research activities of its teaching staff are related to the assessment of legal issues of relevance for the future development of law, whereby such scientific research not only meets the objectives of the study field (and the topicalities of each field of law), but also directly reflects the element of creativity of scientific activity, thus contributing to the further scientific development (SAR, chapter 2.4.1.). Essentially this reflects a strong practical/applied research direction that is mainly concentrated in sub-fields of law, whereby "interdisciplinary" research is understood and practiced as between the sub-fields of law. Truly interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary research reflected in joint research across other social science disciplines and even across science disciplines from non-social sciences (e.g. neurolaw) is not mentioned in the SAR (chapter 2.4.1.), nor is there a reference to transdisciplinary research. This is not necessarily a weakness in terms of the UL FL research directions, but it reflects lack of innovation in terms of research direction, while it reflects the UL FL strengths in the area of teaching and applied research.

Same research direction with a strong focus on the sub-fields of law is reflected in the doctoral study programme “Law”, which makes it corresponding to the development goals of the UL FL and significant for the study field “Law”.

This chapter of the SAR (chapter 2.4.1.) makes no reference to the UL FL Legal Science Research Institute (which gets briefly mentioned in the SAR in chapters 2.4.4. and 2.5.2.), although in terms of strategically defined research directions one might expect otherwise.

None of the above assessments should be considered as weaknesses, but rather as a focus on applied research which for the scientific discipline of “Law” is very common throughout Europe and even globally. As a consequence of such research direction and strong focus on the sub-fields of law as well as national applied research, the UL FL seemingly misses out on opportunities (and funding) for international and multidisciplinary scientific research projects. In this regard the UL FL Legal Science Research Institute should in the long term take a stronger strategic approach aimed not only at promoting and supporting scientific/applied research at the UL FL, but actively engaging in research and thus developing a distinct research profile of the UL FL which makes it recognizable both nationally, but even more internationally. Thus far there are 2 research positions at the UL FL Legal Science Research Institute - analyzed together with the fact that many UL FL teaching staff is primarily not employed at the UL FL, but rather mainly employed in the practical field, thus focusing their scientific activities on applied research, the current research directions may be assessed as appropriate and in accordance with the invested resources, while still highly relevant for the study field of “Law” and the relevant legal profession and its practice.

1.4.2. General concerns about the data and documentation provided with regards to teaching staff and scientific research: The documentation made available for the purpose of conducting the assessment (Annex 6, Annex 7, Annex 8, Annex 9 - English language versions; Annex 22.1, Annex 22.2, Annex 22.3, Annex 22.4, Annex 22.5, Annex 22.6 - English and Latvian language versions) and the data/information contained therein displays significant discrepancies for which only limitedly plausible explanation could be obtained at the time of drafting the report at hand. Said discrepancies undermine an evidence-based assessment of criteria 1.4.2., 1.4.4., as well as criteria 1.3.6. and 1.3.7., which is also the case when it comes to the assessment of teaching staff and scientific research aspects with regards to all the 6 study programmes analyzed hereafter.

For more than 30% of the UL FL teaching staff (Annex 6 lists 89 teaching staff), there is no information available about their publications. Annex 9 only lists 77 teaching staff. This discrepancy includes 8 staff members with no publications who are not listed in Annex 9, plus 4 staff members who have publications but are also missing from Annex 9. In total, there are 12 staff members unaccounted for, indicating that Annex 9 only reflects 77 staff, while Annex 6 shows 89. The expert team conducted a thorough analysis and did not solely rely on the incorrect data in Annex 8, as acknowledged by the HEI. Instead, expert team performed a more favorable analysis of the staff's publications by manually extracting data from Annex 9 (see Table 1, provided as an annex to the report). This approach was taken because Annex 8 was both incorrect and less favorable for the HEI. Expert team transparently referred to the specific annexes (6 and 9) and correctly pointed out that there is no information about the publications of 12 staff members in Annex 9. Specifically, 8 staff members should have been listed by name with a note indicating that they have no publications, while 4 staff members should have been listed along with their publications. Additionally, should be noted that even after the HEI corrected Annex 7, which was initially very inaccurate, it still contained errors, lacking the CVs of 2 staff members. This raises questions about how the UL FL quantitative data was collected and suggests that a more diligent and/or automated data collection process would have yielded significantly better results (see Table 1).

Out of all the UL FL teaching staff (Annex 6 lists 89 teaching staff) in the Latvian language versions of the descriptions of the study courses of all 6 study programmes (Annex 22.1, Annex 22.2, Annex 22.3, Annex 22.4, Annex 22.5, Annex 22.6) more than 25% of UL FL teaching staff is not listed as “kursa izstrādātājs” which according to AIKA’s publicly available information refers to the person responsible for the content and implementation of the study course (“Norāda atbildīgo par studiju kursa saturu un īstenošanu.”). The understanding of UL FL is that “kursa izstrādātājs” refers to “the person who has drafted the course description (author of the course description) and not the person, who actually teaches the course” and that the UL FL cannot change the course developer due to UL restrictions in this regard. From an assessment point of view it is valuable additional information to know who initially developed a course (last year, 3 or 5 or 10 years ago), but that is not information relevant for an assessment of teaching staff’s didactical or professional competences or their scientific/applied research work and results, esp. when crossanalysing study course descriptions (Annex 22.1, Annex 22.2, Annex 22.3, Annex 22.4, Annex 22.5, Annex 22.6), teaching staff CVs (Annex 7) and teaching staff’s publications (Annex 9).

Slight discrepancies, such as number of UL FL teaching staff (Annex 6 - 89) and number of available CVs of teaching staff (Annex 7 - 87), although unfortunate, have had no major impact on the assessment, but when analyzing the publications of the teaching staff for whom this information was made available (Annex 9 - 77; Annex 6 - 89), then the quantitative analysis again shows significant discrepancies when compared to UL FL quantitative data (Annex 8, data in row 1 on scientific publications), unfortunately to the disadvantage of UL FL. This poses the question about how the UL FL quantitative data was collected and shows that an overall more diligent and/or automated data collection would have produced far more favorable results, as the data in Table 1 in the Annex “Annex with data graphs and tables” shows.

In light of said discrepancies the UL FL was kindly asked to double check the documentation and data/information provided and on 15/11/2024 verified the accuracy of all documentation provided in both language versions. Considering all the detected discrepancies as demonstrated above, the assessment with regards to UL FL teaching staff as well as scientific/applied research (results) cannot be considered fully evidence-based, but strongly relies on the SAR as well as the findings and impressions from the assessment visit.

The UL FL heavily relies on scientific/applied research results such as scientific monographs, scientific articles and other publications which are consistently integrated in the study process in all the 6 study programmes and thereby on all levels. The connection of scientific/applied research in the study field of “Law” with the study process is insofar logical and justified as students on all levels and in all programmes engage in producing study/research papers, bachelor, master and doctoral thesis. The doctoral programme particularly strongly connects scientific research with the study process and does this in a logical and justified manner.

In this context it must be appraised that students of most of the study programmes are introduced to academic integrity and scientific ethics regulations and best practices, whereby the assessment visit detected the need for such introductory information also to be provided to master students (which might have completed their bachelor studies not so recently to be well-informed about these aspects).

Typical for the study field of “Law”, scientific/applied research is mainly understood as the production of scientific/applicable knowledge that is then presented at conferences and/or in publications of different kinds. Only exceptionally is scientific/applied research understood as the engagement in national/international research teams and projects and empirical data collection,

whereby empirical data in legal scholarly work mainly stems from case (law) analysis. Such common understanding of legal scientific/research inevitably makes the research work a highly individualized enterprise and law faculties in general highly depending on the individual initiative/competences/skills of its teaching staff to engage in such research work. Specific for the UL FL in this context is the low share of teaching staff that can focus on research, most likely due to being heavily involved in legal practice. This is then reflected in a relatively low and highly variable scientific research production when measured by teaching staff's publications on the UL FL level, as the data in Figure 1 in the Annex "Annex with data graphs and tables" shows.

Based on publication data provided in Annex 9 for a total of 77 out of 89 teaching staff (Annex 6) of the UL FL the most favorable dataset shows that in the reporting period also covered in Annex 8 (2019-2024) in 5 years less than 50% of the teaching staff has published more than 2 publications (of any kind) annually (Figure 1 in the Annex "Annex with data graphs and tables").

When however disregarding the category of "popular-scientific publications", as per SAR provision (SAR instruction for annex 9 states: "list of publications related to the study programme, which have been published in peer-reviewed editions") and because in numerous instances this category includes texts published in daily press (which cannot be considered as peer-reviewed editions), the data is shown in Figure 2 in the Annex "Annex with data graphs and tables". The majority of the 75 teaching staff of the UL FL for which data by publication type could be retrieved from Annex 9 (for 2 teaching staff the publications in Annex 9 were not categorized at all) have published either less than 1 or less than 2 peer-reviewed publications annually. Interestingly, there is a highly productive minority of teaching staff that (compared to the majority) is hyperproductive in scientific publishing and further analysis might reveal valuable insight into the causes and conditions of high/medium/low production of scientific outputs. The findings also indicate as a general impression across all study programmes' course descriptions that the level at which scientific research in the form of course readings is connected to and integrated in the study process across the 6 different study programmes is highly dependent on the individual teaching staff's high/medium/low level of scientific publication, at least when focusing on integrating UL FL research into the study process and notwithstanding that even those teaching staff with lower scientific production levels frequently includes scientific publications (not self-authored) in the course readings. There are however instances where the compulsory course readings are quite outdated (newer editions of books are meanwhile available) which in terms of transposing newest scientific research and knowledge into the study process should be avoided.

1.4.3. As with the previous chapter, the UL FL understands international cooperation in scientific/applied research mainly as reflected in its teaching staff presenting research papers at international conferences and as reflected by their international scientific publications, alongside their engagement in a broad range of international bodies, institutions, associations, boards, committees, etc. Unfortunately none of the relevant annexes in the SAR's chapter on scientific research contain measurable quantitative data or indicators that might inform an evidence based assessment, but again rely on counts of international scientific publications, international scientific conference presentations and international scientific project participations (Annex 8) and a detailed publication list for most (but not all) of its teaching staff (Annex 9). When however considering the teaching staff's CVs (Annex 7) the general impression is that the measured indicators (Annex 8 and 9) do not fully reflect the level of international scientific/applied research cooperation, but rather understate it. The UL FL would do well in reconsidering how it measures and could measure international research cooperation by diversifying the indicators used to include obvious strengths such as participation in a broad range of international bodies, institutions, associations, boards, committees, etc. Also regional and therefore international cooperation with researchers from Estonia

and Lithuania should be measured with relevant indicators, as should the international conferences that are regularly being organized at the UL FL, not only in terms of counting the number of conferences, but also for example by counting the number of conference participants from abroad or the number of international members of such conferences' scientific or programme committees or the number of scientific papers published by foreign authors in the conference proceedings. There is also no systematically collected data about foreign scholars' guest lectures at UL FL or about UL FL teaching staff's guest lectures abroad. All these are indicators that would add to a more accurate picture of the UL FL international research cooperation, which picture is currently dominated by counts of publications, conference and project participations. As such the data most likely understates UL FL international research cooperation, especially with regards to the UL FL teaching staff's participation in international scientific projects (a total of 4 in the 5 year reporting period according to Annex 8).

Based on data provided in Annex 8, the UL FL teaching staff (89 according to Annex 6) on average participates in approx. 1 international scientific conference annually (439 total 2019-2024). With regards to international scientific publications of UL FL teaching staff as provided in Annex 9 for the 5-year reporting period used in Annex 8 the findings are displayed in Figure 3 in the Annex "Annex with data graphs and tables" (for the purpose of the assessment and in order to present a balanced finding, the data in Annex 9 was used, as it is much more favorable for the UL FL, as compared to the quantitative data provided in Annex 8, although it covers only 77 out of 89 teaching staff and for only 75 out of 77 the publications were provided by type in Annex 9). The data shows (Figure 3 in the Annex "Annex with data graphs and tables") that the majority of UL FL teaching staff has published less than 1 international scientific publication annually or 0 international scientific publication at all in the 5-year period, whereas 1-2 international scientific publications annually are exceptional and more than 2 annually are highly exceptional. This data serves not as an assessment of the level of international publication production of the UL FL teaching staff or the UN FL as a whole, since there is no set target level of annual or 5-year international scientific publication by the UL FL or the UL in more general terms. Thus, the data/documentation provided is clearly not complete and displays significant discrepancies as explained in the introduction to chapter 1.4. The finding simply highlights the very high level of individual teaching staff's variation when it comes to international scientific research as it is currently being measured by the available indicators. The finding thus shows a lack of strategic approach to the matter of scientific production of teaching staff as the basic data the UL FL would need to design and evaluate such a strategy is not available (has not been submitted in the SAR).

Finally, the UL FL Law Journal has as of 2023 been indexed in the Scopus database and may well be recognized as a major scientific publishing achievement paving the way for future international scientific research publication, especially by attracting more foreign scholar's contributions to the journal.

1.4.4. The SAR (chapter 2.4.4.) provides for a detailed description and self-assessment of the activities carried out by the UL FL teaching staff in the field of scientific/applied research relevant to the study field and provides numerous examples. The examples in chapter 2.4.4. document that the UL FL teaching staff is strongly engaged in scientific/applied research and that there are several prominent and valuable research projects (both national and international) being implemented and that they have produced significant outputs (see in more detail chapter 2.4.4. of the report at hands with regards to the doctoral study programme). The SAR (chapter 2.4.4.) does however not specify the way how the UL FL promotes the involvement of its teaching staff in scientific research, nor does it clearly identify the mechanisms it has developed for said involvement. This undermines an actual assessment of said mechanisms and calls for future strategic action - not only in terms of the

development of the said mechanisms, but also the creation of meaningful indicators that may be used for their evaluation with regards to functioning and efficiency.

The UL FL Legal Science Research Institute, although clearly a key-component of an overall mechanism to involve UL FL teaching staff in scientific/applied research, currently seems to primarily focus on promoting research, providing information on open calls, supporting project applications and developing project application skills and competences. In view of the UL FL Legal Science Research Institute personnel resources (2 research staff positions) this is already an extraordinary output, especially having in mind the described examples of successful research projects that are being implemented and the activities conducted. Nevertheless, as the quantitative data on (inter)national scientific project participation shows, the UL FL teaching staff's overall involvement in (inter)national scientific projects (total of 8 throughout 5 years) is rather low and a clear exception. This (in all likelihood) is probably not a direct consequence of lacking mechanisms to involve the teaching staff more broadly in scientific research projects, but rather a reflection of the very individualized type of scientific/applied research conducted generally in the study field "Law" and the large share of the UL FL teaching staff that is not primarily employed at the UL FL, but in the legal/government profession.

1.4.5. The UL FL in relation to involving students in scientific/applied research build on the same understanding of scientific/applied research as with regards to the scientific/applied research of its teaching staff, thereby heavily focusing on study/research papers produced at all levels of study and with growing scope and complexity as the study level rises. Students have the opportunity to participate in paper competitions as well as to publish in the UL FL publications or to present at (inter)national conferences, where students also are involved in organization and have special student panels (SAR chapter 2.4.5.). These are all excellent and valuable examples of promoting scientific/applied research among students and engaging them in research work, although no data seems to be systematically collected about students' involvement in scientific/applied research, which makes an evidence-based assessment of the scope and quality of such an engagement of students impossible. Such an individualized approach, which considers students' writing of student papers and reports as scientific/applied research, again well reflects the general approach to legal scientific research that is highly individualized and strongly relies on self-initiative of the students and/or individual teaching staff's self-initiative to get students actively involved in research. As the study level rises, students' competences grow and thus their scope and quality of research work rises, which is particularly evident on the master and especially the doctoral study level.

As in the previous chapter of the SAR (chapter 2.4.4.), also in this chapter of the SAR (chapter 2.4.5.), the UL FL does not identify systematic mechanisms that have been developed at the strategic level to specifically target the student population in order to foster their involvement in scientific/applied research. The described examples provided in the SAR demonstrate that the UL FL clearly recognises the importance of student involvement in research activities and that numerous activities are being implemented in this regard, but there is no information provided about a set of actionable measures making up a coherent bundle that might be clearly recognised as a mechanism. Nevertheless, the examples and activities described in the SAR show that students in all study programmes and on all levels have the opportunity to engage in research and that there are many instances in this regard.

No data about student involvement in scientific/applied research is available and thus an evidence-based overall assessment of whether and to which extent any of the measures described in the SAR are functioning or efficient is not possible. It is also not clear whether and to which extent the UL FL Legal Science Research Institute plays a role in promoting scientific/applied research among the

student population. When prospectively developing strategically designed mechanisms to engage students in scientific/applied research, including (inter)national research projects, it should be ensured that clear and measurable indicators are designed simultaneously, so that the functioning and efficiency can be quantitatively assessed, especially in ratio to the size of the student population and distinguishing between the different levels of the study programmes as well as their either professional or academic orientation. Clearly academic master students and doctoral students should as a rule be involved in scientific/applied research, whereas lower level study program students and students in the professional study programmes will most likely be less interested and thus less inclined to scientific/applied research.

To conclude with, the assessment visit (at least on the sample of the students of all study levels the discussions were held with) showed that there is a lack of awareness among students about ongoing (inter)national research projects that are being implemented at the UL FL or by the UL FL teaching staff.

1.4.6. The SAR understands innovative solutions in the field of law only in relation to study methods, but not with regards to scientific/applied research. Therefore the SAR with regards to innovative solutions in research does not provide any assessment or data. Innovative solutions, as understood by the UL FL with regards to study methods are however being applied throughout the study process at the UL FL at all study levels. These include moot trails, field trips, entry and exit cards, self-test made available on the e-learning platform, legal clinics, participation in moot court competitions as well as other student competitions. The assessment visit thus showed that all the course teaching material (esp. lecture presentations) as well as exam results are made available to students on the e-learning platform. The e-learning platform is also integrated with the administration of grades on the side of UL FL teaching staff, ensuring that grades have to be submitted only once and via the same platform that is being used for providing the information about the grades to students - this is highly commendable and surely has a positive effect on the administrative workload of the teaching staff.

In light of such a high level of process innovation with regards to grade administration by the teaching staff it comes as a surprise that the data collection about key performance indicators of the UL FL is being conducted manually, rather than by designing and using an automatic data collection system, which would undoubtedly not only ensure the consistency of the data collected on various indicators about teaching staff, scientific/applied research (results) and course description content for all the 6 study programmes, but also relief the UL FL management of repetitive administrative workload.

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

The UL FL research directions correspond to the 5 main subfields of law and thereby are also in line with commonly accepted research directions in the scientific field of law. Interdisciplinarity is mainly seen as research cooperation across the 5 subfields of law, but multi- or transdisciplinary research directions across the social (and other) sciences and disciplines does not seem to play a role, at least not on a strategic level. The research directions, as evidenced by the teaching staff's publications during a 6-year period (Annex 9) are highly relevant for the study field of "Law" and legal practice, as well as law making and case-law (due to the strong involvement of the teaching staff in the legal 'industry'). The focus of the research direction clearly (but not exclusively) is on national legal scholarship, which is quite typical for the legal sciences. The doctoral program, as a generator of scientific/applied research plays a key role and heavily relies on individual research and

mentorship. The UL FL Legal Science Research Institute should have a stronger strategic approach and actively engage in research, while developing a distinct, recognisable and internationally appealing research profile of the UL FL. Academic integrity and research ethics are meaningfully regulated at UL and procedures are in place to address misconduct and breaches, whereas both students and teaching staff are trained and aware of the commonly accepted standards. It is particularly good practice and highly commendable that plagiarism is meticulously defined and sets the highest possible standard. Scientific/applied research is as a rule included in the study process, mainly by ensuring students' research work via study/research papers on all levels and by providing a broad range of scientific literature as (mandatory and elective) course readings. Same applies to international research cooperation, but on a smaller scale, esp. when looking at scientific/applied international research projects. The indicators currently used by the UL FL to measure and assess (international) scientific/applied research do not fully reflect the actual research that is being conducted at the UL FL. Social sciences, particularly legal sciences, are indeed specific in many regards when it comes to measuring research and scientific production. So, for example Annex 8 lists the category of "patents" which commonly is not a key performance indicator for the study field of law, instead of developing indicators that meaningfully reflect all the ongoing (but not measured) research activities of the UL FL. The UL FL is indeed involving its teaching staff as well as students from all study programmes and levels in scientific/applied research and provides numerous examples in support of this finding. A more systematic and a strategic approach would however ensure that a coherent mechanism is developed and implemented simultaneously designing meaningful and measurable indicators necessary for assessing its functioning and efficiency. Currently there is a lack of data for such an assessment. Numerous innovative solutions are being applied in the study field and they have a significant positive impact on the study process, at least from what was discussed with relevant stakeholders during the assessment visit. Here the moot court competitions are a key component, but also the use of the e-learning platform is commendable, esp. with regards to process innovation in the area of grade administration. Process innovation is urgently needed in the area of data collection about key performance indicators of the UL FL.

#### Strengths:

- 1) The UL FL has 5 main research directions which are transposed via its main corresponding organizational units (charis/departments) and integrated into the study process by the teaching staff that is composed of nationally leading legal scholars and practitioners.
- 2) The mainly individual research creation reflects the particularities of legal sciences and ensures the greatest level of academic freedom and research autonomy on the side of both teaching staff as well as students in all study programmes and on all levels.
- 3) The UL FL Legal Science Research Institute has been established and is proactively engaging in promoting and supporting scientific/applied research among teaching staff, especially concerning project funding opportunities, application and implementation.
- 4) There are numerous positive examples of the UL FL teaching staff and students being involved and incentivized to engage in scientific/applied research.
- 5) Innovative solutions are being used to achieve positive effects on the study process, whereby moot court (competitions), legal clinics and the use of the e-learning platform stand out as highly commendable examples.

Weaknesses:

1) There is prevalent understanding of the legal sciences as being inherently monodisciplinary, so that interdisciplinarity is practiced as cooperation between the subfields of law, instead between scientific disciplines, whereby the research and funding opportunities for multi- and transdisciplinary research do not appear to have been recognized.

2) Systematic data collection about key performance indicators is neither automatic, nor does it provide data that would more accurately capture diverse aspects of scientific/applied research.

## **Assessment of the requirement [2]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The assessment is based on the analysis as provided for criterias 1.4.1.-1.4.6. and in view of the significant discrepancies in the data and documentation provided is mainly based on the assessment visit, while taking into account the leading role of the UL FL in scientific/applied research on the national level.

## **1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

### **Analysis**

1.5.1. As demonstrated in chapter 2.5.1. of the SAR, the cooperation efforts of the FL with various Latvian institutions are a key element of the provision of relevant theoretical and practical skills for the prospective lawyers and/ or pre-trial investigators. Over the years a meaningful network of active cooperations with state and government institutions have been established, reaching from the court system to public administration offices as well as associations of different legal professions. A number of the mentioned professionals also participate in the FL Final Examinations Board.

Internships for students are provided by such partners on a regular and broad basis, joint conferences, seminars and discussions are organized on a regular basis. Many high ranking and experienced practitioners fulfill a double role as practitioners in their fields and as lecturers in different capacities at the FL.

The FL academic staff on the other hand is involved in drafting legislation and is asked to give expert opinions on a wide range of legal issues in order to support the legislator. Cooperations on different levels exist between the FL and the Supreme Court, the Councils of Sworn Advocates and Notaries of Latvia, different Examination Commissions and other professional bodies. Research of FL academics is readily published with all major publishing houses in Latvia and some prestigious publishing units like Kluwer Law International, Springer etc.

Cooperations with non-governmental organizations are also ongoing (SAR, p. 79).

The assessment visit has during the discussions established that a number of institutions within the

cooperation network with the FL offer topics for final theses, also offering advisory support in providing research information and also supporting the further development of the study programmes as important stakeholders (SAR. p. 79). This joint approach furnishes students with meaningful research topics and opens the gates for successful students to be potentially employed at such institutions.

The FL cooperates with other HEIs through promotional councils, summer schools and other means, just naming the bilateral cooperation agreement with Riga Graduate School of Law, allowing students of both institutions to study mutually recognized courses of the respective other institution as well as the possibility to freely avail of the resources of both institutions.

A new cooperation approach has been established in 2022 by forming the ISA consortium based on an alliance of the Ministry of the Interior, the State Police College, the Riga Stradins University and the University of Latvia. Pooling the respective resources, the task for the FL as a core unit for one of the consortium partners was to design and implement two study programmes (bachelor and master) on Pre-Trial Investigation at the FL starting from the academic year 2023/24 (SAR, p. 79-80). These efforts were successful.

Cooperation are also ongoing with other UL Faculties, when it comes to the teaching of languages, pedagogical skills, etc (SAR, p. 80).

The wider community is readily informed through different means (such as website announcements, the FL YouTube channel ) about new developments and special occasions at the FL. The UL FL Legal Clinic provides legal advice support, always guided by legal professionals. All in all the cooperation network supports the furthering of the strategic goals of the UL and in reaching the learning outcomes of the FL programmes. Generally, the identified cooperation opportunities are sealed with a cooperation agreement (SAR. p. 80). The management of cooperations fall in the scope of the FL management, namely the dean, the vice-dean and the directors of the study programmes.

1.5.2. Cooperation on an international level have been established with professional organizations such as the European Law Faculties Association, consisting of more than 200 law faculties of HEIs in the EU and other countries, sharing best practices and ideas on the implementation of new developments in law education. The FL additionally is a member of the European Public Law Organization. International Moot Courts, diverse Summer Schools and Erasmus+ opportunities add to the international portfolio (SAR, p. 81).

Erasmus+ has started with 69 bilateral cooperation agreements having been concluded, the number up to now having been increased considerably to 224 bilateral cooperation agreements in 51 countries on different topics of cooperation, including students, teaching staff and administrative staff (SAR, p. 81).

In the SAR (p. 81) a number of partner institutions abroad and the respective activities as well as the resulting benefits for the FL and its students have been listed and described. Joint research projects, joint publications and visiting scholars in direction Latvia and vice versa have been established and scientific conferences have been successfully set up.

Staff exchange weeks have been visited by FL staff to exchange on best practices concerning Erasmus+ activities and other topics. The same is true for FL being regularly present at functions of the Rotterdam Law Network (SAR, p. 81).

In the discussions with the Heads of International Cooperation and the Mobility Department it could be established that the FL staff and students are diligently and transparently informed about any Erasmus+ mobility opportunities available in due course. Students and graduates have confirmed that up to date information and support have not been missing. In much the same way, cooperation offers from international partners are channeled by the FL to the students to enable those interested in such activities to take part. A number of such activities and the fruits they were bearing are listed in the SAR (p. 81, 82). Foreign guest lecturers were also welcomed at the FL during the reporting period, having the support of Erasmus+ and Fullbright programmes.

Concerning research projects, the FL collaborates with programmes of the European Commission (e.g. 'Capacity Building and Awareness Raising to Prevent and Combat Intolerance in Latvia-CALDER'), avails of the internship programme of the European Court of Human Rights or took part in the conference on 'Law and Language' in joint organization with the European Court of Justice in 2023 (SAR, p. 82).

The UL FL Legal Science Research Institute in national and international conferences and forums. A number of publications (articles and monographs) on different subjects have been the results of such research efforts.

Other types of cooperation to be named are the Global Campus of Human Rights, where the UL FL is taking part, opening opportunities for Master's programme students with special study opportunities at partner institutions. The FL lecturers are part of Latvia's representation on the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission). The UL FL has also since 2020 become a partner in the European COST scientific project 'European Digital Human Rights Network', scrutinizing private media companies, to which extent human rights principles are followed in this sector (SAR, p. 83).

During the pandemic, mobilities that would have required traveling, almost came to a standstill and are picking up gradually. However, the participation in international law moot courts has been successfully continued. International competitions and mobilities have been followed remotely, whenever possible (SAR, p. 83).

The selection of foreign cooperation partners need to fulfill the criteria of being a fitting partner for the FL and its programmes, of benefitting the development of studies and furthering the overall goal of adding to the excellence of science. Networking and research partners of all sorts are invited to take part in FL activities as well as pose their own ideas of future projects, including opportunities for students and staff alike.

The faculty management is responsible for the overall internationalization activities of the FL.

1.5.3. Mobilities - outgoing and incoming - of teaching staff and students play an important role in the strategic decision making of the FL. The UL centralized and FL specific mechanisms are said to be in place to improve the study field content, promoting its development and assessing its quality.

Erasmus+ international exchange tools are promoted and made available to all relevant stakeholders on a regular basis. Close ties exist with the US Center for International Legal Studies, leading to lectures and workshops by US practitioners. A cooperation with the German Academic Exchange Service, DAAD, resulted in long-term guest lecturers from Germany (SAR, p. 85).

During the pandemic, exchange rates dropped considerably and are slowly picking up again.

Altogether, incoming student figures are higher than those of outgoings, including internships SAR, p. 85, 86). Much thought has gone into explaining why the detailed itemized mobility figures over the accreditation period overall are quite poor, measured against the advertised importance of internationalization in general and mobilities specifically. It is brought to mind that students of law concentrate foremost on national topics keeping in mind that they would have to pass the national unified qualification examination for lawyers in order to be able to practice as lawyers. Overall workload, language abilities and a focus on career opportunities in the national realm make students cautious when it comes to mobilities which seem to be of uncertain value (SAR, p. 86).

In comparison, even lower are the mobility rates of outgoing faculty. The SAR (p. 87) explains in detail that most of the UL FL faculty members work in demanding legal professions as prosecutors, judges, advocates, MPs etc. Their excruciating workload of job and teaching wouldn't allow them to meet the requirements of teaching mobilities. Organizational difficulties add to the list of obstacles.

The interest of incoming guest lecturers of all sorts is considerably higher. Names and figures are provided.

The constraints in traveling and organizing after the pandemic times are gone and the network of partner institutions still stands. Teaching mobility and in fact all types of mobilities in all directions are still of great importance for the UL FL because mobilities broaden the horizon and improve the quality of studies as a result. New opportunities and networks arise. International cooperation is said to be the backbone for the joint implementation of projects, conferences, seminars and publications (SAR, p. 88).

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

Cooperation with institutions, associations, cooperation and administrative units, both nationally and internationally consist of a long standing and highly effective and narrowly woven network, benefitting the students of the FL and adding to its reputation. Numerous activities result out of that network that includes international partnerships. Moot courts, cross border conferences on modern developments in the law field, projects with different international players and joint publications speak their own language. All stakeholders contribute to the evolution of the FL programmes. Their input is heard and makes an impact. This fact could be established in the discussion with teaching staff and employers representatives alike. Students and graduates are generally delighted to have renowned professionals as teachers, whose expertise is well accepted. The close collaboration with these practitioners is an excellent training for the labour market and could open opportunities.

In the field of mobilities, the situation is different. Not only are the overall figure over the years of the reporting period low, even taking into account that the pandemic worldwide left its scars, but the outlook for the future sounds given the fact that the SAR more or less gives numerous reasons why mobilities - primarily in the outgoing bracket - are not really feasible for faculty and students.

Looking into it one can see that there is no real action plan, no detailed and decisive strategy for internationalization and/or internationalization at home. It is true that internationalization efforts and successes happen as highlights in different capacities but the lack of a coordinated effort and strategy are apparent. Much thinking seems to move around what doesn't seem to be possible instead of finding, identifying and implementing ways of what is possible during the reporting period.

Starting with the EAIE (European Association for International Education) KPIs for building purposeful partnerships and how to prepare the home ground for that, a great many new Erasmus instruments, starting from a selection of short term stays, different internship models, blended learning activities have not zealously been taken into account because the overall strategy doesn't exist.

The discussion with different groups have shown that ideas already exist, be it to free one semester of national mandatory law courses to support easy mobilities with recognized results, be it using mobilities as direct incentive as a factor for raising salaries, be it that international activities will need a lively report with pictures and stories that are presented through the channels of the UL.

All these ideas were brought forward by different stakeholders of the UL FL during the assessment visit. Now, the possibilities have to be brought into a concept and implemented.

Internationalization happens in manifold appearances in a scattered but not in a strategic and coordinated way, starting off with internationalization at home (EAIE principles) and expanding from there. Both, lecturers and students have expressed keen interest in mobilities that fit their personal and work schedule. A solution oriented strategy needs to be developed and implemented.

Strengths:

- 1) Cooperation's with manifold Latvian and foreign organizations and associations.
- 2) Cross border projects, conferences and joint publications with dedicated partners.
- 3) Very strong and successful presence in the moot court field.
- 4) Internships with European top partners such as the European Court of Human Rights.
- 5) High ranking and experienced practitioners complement the academic staff as long standing lecturers.
- 6) The FL lecturers have made and are making an impact on Latvian law, acting in different capacities for courts, parliament and professional associations.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Lack of a coordinated approach and strategy towards internationalization.
- 2) Lack of an action plan for the implementation of internationalization at home.
- 3) Insufficient use of new elements of Erasmus+ to overcome organizational difficulties.

### **Assessment of the requirement [3]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Assessment is based on analysis of SAR materials, p. 78 ff. and discussions at assessment visit. The UL FL has many cooperations with prestigious institutions nationally and abroad. However, mobilities of staff and students remain on a scarce level and lack of coordinated approach and strategy towards internationalization is detected.

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

### **Analysis**

1.6.1. Based on Annex 14 “Recommendations previous accreditation” in total 21 recommendations were suggested in the previous accreditation procedure (in year 2019) for study field “Law”, which includes:

- 9 recommendations for study field “Law”;
- 3 recommendations for BASP Law;
- 2 recommendations for PMASP Law;
- 5 recommendations for MASP Law and Governance of Institutions;
- 2 recommendations for the Academic Doctoral study programme “Law”.

Based on Annex 14 “Report on the implementation of the recommendations” in total, 18 recommendations were developed for the professional study programme “Pre-trial investigation” in the previous accreditation procedure (2019), which includes:

- 8 recommendations for PBASP Pre-trial investigation;
- 10 recommendations for PMASP Pre-trial investigation.

The recommendations for the study field “Law” in relation to the development of a strategy plan, including risk assessment, have been implemented and the plan has been developed. Generally, the plan as a whole has been developed on the basis of the SAR and the study direction development plan for 2023-2028 has been adopted in 2023 according to Annex 14 “Report on the implementation of the recommendations”. During the previous evaluation period, most recommendations focused on the internationalization dimension of the study programmes, which would provide for a wider promotion of the study programme abroad and introduction of foreign experience here in Latvia, thus obtaining a competitive direction of the study programme. While the UL has stressed the importance of internationalization and mobility window-building, there is little tangible progress seen in this area. It should be said that, in general, the internationalization and mobility of this curriculum is based on the initiative of the students and lecturers themselves, rather than on the overall set-up of the UL (see: chapter 1.6 of the Joint expert report). It should be noted that this is where the specificity of the field of study is marked, where knowledge is based on national regulation. However, in order to create competitive lawyers, the aspect of mobility is very important.

The recommendation on a common approach to academic ethics is being developed independently and the UL has indicated that academic ethics receives special attention during the day-to-day study process and is broadly in line with the nature of the study field as a whole according to the information that mentioned in Annex 14 and meetings with study field and programmes directors. The UL representatives in the meetings said the curriculum does not face a large number of incidents of academic honesty misconduct and does not mark it as a problem in percentage terms. However, artificial intelligence plays a big role these days, so the UL should do strategic planning work to fight new potential violations of academic honesty today and in the future, as well as taking active measures to ensure that students and teaching staff are properly informed about the ethical

use of AI tools and the UL guidelines (see: chapter 1.1.6 of the Joint expert report).

Currently, the student survey system is mandatory as said in the meetings with the UL students. Students cannot sign up for the next semester unless they have completed a survey with a rating on their studies and tutors. As a result, feedback is considered to be provided and, according to the UL, much attention is paid to it.

The UL FL is committed to increasing scientific/applied research engagement and there are good practices in place to support teaching staff as well as students to engage in research. Nevertheless, there is a lack of mechanisms and measures on the strategic level, which is thus accompanied by a lack of measuring of outputs related to funding, which undermines the assessment of whether and how said support/funding is contributing to increased scientific/applied research engagement. Therefore the general impression, confirmed by findings from the assessment visit, is that research engagement is highly dependent on staff's/students' self-initiative.

As regards the recommendation on a targeted approach to the professional development of academic staff, it should be noted that the UL has the head of the Institute of legal Science in this matter, which provides advisory support to teaching staff to inform them about current projects. As regards the competence of teaching staff of the UL in pedagogy, the regulatory framework provides that academic staff of institutions of higher education and colleges shall, until the end of the term of election, acquire professional improvement programmes regarding innovations in the higher education system, university didactic or educational work management in the amount of 160 academic hours (including at least 60 contact hours). Professional development may include appropriate international mobility as well as participation in conferences and seminars, as evidenced by documents submitted by academic staff.

As for research, UL needs to think about a strategy to provide curriculum literature that would be topical for today (for theory and practice), as well as moving towards academic staff need to use their theoretical and practical expertise and create new teaching materials for students.

As to the recommendation about the opportunities to study in English, there is currently no significant progress. During the assessment visit, the UL representatives said that due to COVID enrollment, many of the planned events were postponed and already the university is converging and attracting new guest speakers in search of strategic solutions, including competitive salary.

As regards mobility opportunities in all study programmes, both for students and teaching staff are limited. The UL bases this on the rigorous schedule for studying and the complexity of all the necessary deliverables. Teaching staff and students themselves indicate that mobility opportunities are offered by the UL, yet only they are the ones who decide to use them or not. The UL representatives are convinced that a mandatory mobility requirement could have a negative impact on the quality of study programme acquisition (see: chapter 1.5.3 of the Joint expert report).

On the recommendation to promote the doctoral programme, the UL said the number of defended thesis has increased in recent years (according to Annex 14): in 2020/2021 year, 21 applicants applied for a doctorate and 15 doctoral students started their studies. With regard to this recommendation, the desire to become an academic is a highly targeted and deliberate choice. Of course, the teaching staff plays a key role on the way to such a choice, inspiring its students and calling for new research projects to collaborate on new practices and learn new theoretical and practical approaches to legal science.

The recommendations of the Bachelor and Master level Pre-trial investigation study programmes are generally fulfilled or implemented during the process. The specifics of this study programme is that it was designed on a public order, or demand, for investigators to qualify. The programme is currently in the early stages of developing practices.

During the assessment visit, the UL representatives emphasized that together with the programme's developers, measures were taken to promote the attraction of field practitioners to the study programme in order to ensure qualitative acquisition of its required practical skills. According to the UL representatives, the lists of practitioners have been established and will be renewed every year of study – that is also mentioned in Annex 14.

Regarding the recommendation on the access to the study programme also with private funding, the UL has indicated that part-time students, in case of loss of state funding, will be provided with the possibility to continue studying with their own funding.

The UL is currently committed to developing support programmes to promote academic staff research to reward researchers for the performance that is important for law science, however such support programmes will depend on access to external funding.

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

Finally, it should be said that the UL has assessed all the previous recommendations and analysed them with its comments and arguments. However, it should be noted that not all recommendations have been taken into account and implemented. Several are in the process of ongoing enforcement, as:

- study field internationalization dimension and mobility opportunities;
- access to studies in English;
- development of a strategy to effectively promote research.

Strengths:

- 1) The study programme “Law” attracts high level practitioners who are able to inspire young and existing students with their knowledge. The study field “Law” is highly valued by employers and former students.
- 2) The study programmes “Pre-trial investigation” addresses a national problem of lack of professionals and produces new investigators, which is a major contribution to the whole society.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Neither of the study programmes “Law” show any practical international cooperation with any other university or no strategic cooperation has been developed, for example with Baltic universities in this field. A strategy on mobility and vision of making the university and young Latvian lawyers competitive at least at the level of the Baltic States has not been developed.
- 2) The UL doesn't have a strategic vision about how to provide access to studies in English, thus attracting foreign students.

## Assessment of the requirement [4]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The UL should continue work on implementation of recommendations, in particular those related to international cooperation, promotion of research and provision of academic staff.

## 1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

- |   |
|---|
| 1) Introduce and use the new and flexible elements of Erasmus+ to start out with more creative approaches towards mobilities.   |
| 2) Implement an action plan for internationalization at home as a basis for mobilities.   |
| 3) Design and implement data collection that enables an evidence-based assessment of the direct and the indirect research funding systems' efficiency, e.g., by collecting actual funding data (costs covered) in relation to actual scientific/applied research results (publications, conference participations, project participations). |
| 4) Crosscheck and update/correct data collected about teaching staff, scientific/applied research results and teaching staff's publications and update/correct all study course descriptions with regards to teaching staff.  |
| 5) Introduce automated data collection, in particular about teaching staff and scientific/applied research results, ideally including basic data about the UL FL funding for scientific/applied research.   |
| 6) Develop a strategy to promote research for teaching staff and students.  |
| 7) Develop a strategy about how to be competitive in the Baltics.   |
| 8) Establish a permanent follow-up mechanism at the central level to monitor how faculties contribute to achieving UL's strategic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).  |
| 9) Offer regular training for students and staff about the ethical use of AI tools in academic work, emphasizing UL's guidelines and ensuring consistent adherence to established recommendations.  |
| 10) Although reconstruction is planned for the UL premises at 19 Raina Boulevard, all efforts should be made to provide students and teaching staff with dining options in the UL premises.   |
| 11) Significantly increase the number of mobility of outgoing teaching staff.   |
| 12) Improve the visibility of the Quality Assurance System (QAS) on the FL website by providing detailed information on stakeholder-driven enhancements, feedback outcomes, and the steps taken to address identified weaknesses.   |
| 13) Develop and implement clear protocols for documenting and disseminating how graduate feedback is utilized in refining programmes. Regularly publish reports highlighting specific adjustments made in response to alumni input to align the curriculum with evolving professional demands.  |

## Long-term recommendations

- 1) Develop a coordinated, decisive and long-term internationalization strategy, using the input of all stakeholder groups.
- 2) Increase the share of teaching staff that is principally employed at the UL FL.
- 3) Develop strategy about how to produce access to studies in English, thus attracting foreign students.
- 4) Revise the division of competences in the management of the study field, preventing overlapping roles, granting programme directors more autonomy and authority, particularly in areas critical to programme management, such as staff-related decisions.
- 5) Revise standards requiring individual feedback to students as a standard component of the evaluation process.
- 6) Review the procedures for recognizing non-formal learning outcomes to improve accessibility and encourage greater utilization of these opportunities by students.
- 7) Equip fully the facilities for disabled students.
- 8) Increase the amount of mobility of outgoing teaching staff to improve cooperation and internationalization of the study process.

## II - "Pre-trial Investigation" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Pre-trial Investigation" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

2.1.1. The Professional Bachelor's (First-cycle) Study Programme "Pre-trial investigation" 42380 (PBASP Pre-trial investigation) demonstrates compliance with the study field "Law" ( study field) in terms of curriculum content, objectives, and expected outcomes. This compliance is supported by the programme's alignment with the "Investigator (Criminal Law)" occupational standard and the inclusion of modules predominantly falling under the law sub-fields, as confirmed by Cabinet Regulations No. 189 ("Noteikumi par profesiju klasifikatoru, profesiju standartu un pamatzdevumiem un pienākumiem"). Furthermore, the programme code "42380" aligns with the requirements for professional bachelor's degrees in law, ensuring coherence with the national educational classification system ( Minister cabinet 322 "Noteikumi par Latvijas izglītības klasifikāciju").

As indicated in the SAR (p. 205) the PBASP Pre-trial investigation development was initiated in response to the Cabinet of Ministers' Order No. 83 ("Par pasākumiem iekšējās drošības un tiesībsargājošo iestāžu izglītības uzlabošanai"), which emphasizes the need for specialized education to enhance internal security. The collaboration with the Internal Security Academy (ISA) and other law enforcement agencies further solidifies the programme's relevance to the study field. Graduates receive a bachelor's degree in law, with a specific qualification as "Investigator (Criminal Law)," reflecting both the academic and professional focus of the programme.

2.1.2. As demonstrated in the SAR (p. 205–206), the PBASP Pre-trial Investigation is a well-structured and cohesive programme where the title, code, degree, qualification, aims, objectives, learning

outcomes, and admission requirements are intricately aligned.

The programme title accurately reflects its primary focus on preparing professionals for investigative roles in pre-trial contexts. The code 42380 corresponds to the thematic area of “Law” and complies with the Cabinet of Ministers’ Order No. 322 (“Noteikumi par Latvijas izglītības klasifikāciju”). The awarded degree, “Bachelor’s in Law,” accompanied by the professional qualification “Investigator (Criminal Law),” demonstrates its alignment with national classification systems and occupational standards, such as the Cabinet of Ministers’ Order No. 189 (“Noteikumi par profesiju klasifikatoru, profesiju standartu un pamatuzdevumiem un pienākumiem”).

The programme’s design and learning outcomes emphasize the development of foundational and specialized investigative competencies, directly addressing labour market needs in the field of law enforcement. Core learning outcomes include fostering critical thinking, analytical skills, ethical awareness, and a comprehensive understanding of criminal law, all of which align with the programme’s objective to produce highly skilled and competent investigators.

Admission requirements include a secondary education qualification.

The duration of the programme is 4 years for full-time and 5 years, 5 months for part time studies studies, comprising 240 KP/ECTS credits. The credit structure ensures a balanced distribution between theoretical coursework, practical training, and independent research, complying with the Cabinet of Ministers’ Order No. 305 (“Regulations on the state standard of professional higher education”). A part-time intramural study option, extending to four years, is also available, catering to working professionals and demonstrating flexibility in delivery modes.

Expanding admission pathways, such as recognizing prior experience in law enforcement or related fields, could broaden access and attract a diverse pool of candidates while maintaining the programme’s high academic standards. Similarly, incorporating blended learning formats or digital components could enhance accessibility for students who may face logistical constraints.

The implementation language is primarily Latvian, which is appropriate given the programme’s national context and focus on preparing professionals for local law enforcement roles. However, introducing elective modules or sections in English could enhance international collaboration and attract non-Latvian-speaking professionals.

2.1.3. Since its licensing in 2023, the PBASP Pre-trial investigation has not undergone significant changes. The transition to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) was managed seamlessly, with no adjustments needed to the credit allocation, as the existing structure was found to be consistent with ECTS requirements. This reflects thorough initial planning and alignment with European higher education standards.

2.1.4. As demonstrated in the SAR (pp. 208–209), the PBASP Pre-trial investigation addresses a critical national need for qualified investigators, as highlighted in the Cabinet of Ministers’ Order No. 83 (“Par pasākumiem iekšējās drošības un tiesībsargājošo iestāžu izglītības uzlabošanai”). The programme’s social relevance is reinforced by its alignment with national security priorities and its unique position as the only study programme in Latvia offering the qualification of “Investigator (Criminal Law).”

Employment indicators for graduates are strong, with an obligatory employment agreement binding them to serve in law enforcement agencies for at least five years post-graduation. This ensures

direct integration of graduates into the workforce and guarantees an immediate return on investment for the state. These graduates fill critical roles in agencies such as the State Police, Financial Intelligence Units, and other internal security organizations, strengthening the overall national security infrastructure.

Student enrollment data indicates a high level of initial interest, with 117 students enrolled full-time in 2024/2025. However, attrition rates, as noted in the first academic year (22 students exmatriculated in 2023/2024) (SAR, p. 210), suggest the need for enhanced student support, particularly during the transition phase. Given the PBASP Pre-trial investigation cost-effectiveness threshold of 165 students (see Chapter 2.3.3 of the Joint Expert Report), addressing retention issues is critical. Pre-admission counseling, enhanced academic support, and mentoring initiatives could improve retention rates and ensure sustainability.

The PBASP Pre-trial investigation benefits from its development as part of the Internal Security Academy (ISA) consortium, which unites multiple institutions to enhance internal security education. This collaborative arrangement improves the quality of the study process by utilizing shared expertise and resources. The PBASP Pre-trial investigation funding through the state budget ensures sustainability, while agreements with law enforcement agencies provide practical training opportunities and secure employment for graduates.

However, the collaborative structure of the PBASP Pre-trial investigation would benefit from clearer coordination mechanisms to maintain consistent quality across partner institutions. Regular reviews of the consortium's operational framework and incorporating feedback from all stakeholders could further improve the PBASP Pre-trial investigation adaptability and effectiveness.

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

The PBASP Pre-trial investigation is a strategically designed initiative aligned with Latvia's national security priorities and occupational standard. Its comprehensive curriculum integrates theoretical foundations and practical applications, equipping graduates with the necessary competencies to meet the demands of pre-trial investigation roles. The state-supported framework ensures sustainability, while contractual agreements with law enforcement agencies guarantee employment opportunities for graduates, solidifying its relevance and appeal.

Despite its strengths, areas for improvement remain. High dropout rates (25 percent) signal the need for enhanced student support mechanisms and clearer expectations during the admissions process. The lack of flexible study formats limits accessibility for non-traditional students, and periodic reviews of the programme's structure and outcomes are necessary to maintain its quality and relevance. Additionally, while the ISA consortium enhances resource utilization, clearer coordination mechanisms are required to ensure consistency in programme delivery and stakeholder engagement.

Overall, the PBASP Pre-trial investigation demonstrates strong potential for long-term impact but requires targeted refinements to fully realize its goals and address identified challenges effectively.

Strengths:

1) The PBASP Pre-trial investigation demonstrates strong alignment with national security priorities

and occupational standard, ensuring relevance to Latvia's internal security and law enforcement needs.

2) Graduates benefit from guaranteed employment through contractual agreements with law enforcement agencies, ensuring high placement rates and direct career pathways.

3) The collaborative framework established within the ISA consortium enables efficient resource sharing and enriched programme delivery by leveraging the expertise and facilities of multiple institutions.

Weaknesses:

1) High attrition rates, particularly among first-year students, highlight potential challenges in student preparedness and the adequacy of initial support systems. The curriculum currently lacks sufficient integration of interdisciplinary and soft competencies, which are increasingly relevant in the modern workplace.

2) While the PBASP Pre-trial investigation includes foundational review processes, insufficiently frequent and comprehensive periodic evaluations limit the ability to proactively identify and implement necessary enhancements to maintain alignment with evolving industry.

3) The absence of more flexible study formats, such as blended or remote learning options, restricts accessibility for non-traditional students, including those already employed in related fields seeking professional development.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The PBASP Pre-trial investigation is structured to include study courses specific to the field of law, as well as study courses of a general nature and courses providing for their advancement, which are necessary for the full performance of the professional duties of an investigator (SAR, p. 210). During the on-site visit, the students emphasized that they are very happy about the fact that they have guaranteed job opportunities in law enforcement institutions for at least five years after graduating from the PBASP Pre-trial investigation.

The study programme covers the study of all sub-fields of law at the basic level and the study of courses necessary for the performance of the investigator's professional duties (criminal law, forensic science, operational work, criminology, etc.) at the extended and advanced level (SAR, p. 211).

The content of the study courses is interconnected and complementary, it corresponds to the objectives of the programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcome. Comparison of study courses with knowledge, skills and competence has been carried out in the the Annex 20.4 Mapping learning outcomes of the professional bachelor's study program "Pre-trial Investigation".

The PBASP Pre-trial investigation meets the formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions, and Cabinet of Ministers regulations, issued in accordance with the law:

- Conformance to the state education standard - Cabinet of Ministers 13.06.2023 Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education". The comparison of programme indicators with the requirements specified in the Standard has been carried out in the Annex 17.4 "Compliance of the professional bachelor's study programme "Pre-trial Investigation" with the State Education Standard");
- Conformance to the professional (occupational) standards - Investigator's (in criminal law) occupational standard. The comparison of knowledge required for the performance of core occupational tasks with corresponding study courses in the programme has been carried out in the Annex 18.2 "Compliance of the study programme with the occupational standard - Investigator's (in criminal law)".

However, currently the curriculum lacks integration of some interdisciplinary competencies (Annex 21.4 "Curriculum of the Professional bachelor's study programme "PRE-TRIAL INVESTIGATION"), for example, there are no study courses that provide knowledge and skills in digital forensics, cybersecurity, or international legal frameworks. Neither the professional standard nor the educational standard requires the compulsory acquisition of such competencies, however, their inclusion in the programme would increase the employability of programme graduates in the labor market.

The PBASP Pre-trial investigation can be recognised as a study programme in the field of law specialised in criminal law.

From the attached study plan (Annex 21 4 curriculum of the study programme PBSP Pret-trial Investigation ECTS.docx) it can be seen that PBASP Pre-trial investigation includes courses that provide students with the opportunity to acquire academic knowledge and the skills needed to work as an investigator (Law Enforcement Institutions in Latvia and Abroad, Criminal Law, Criminal procedure Law, Basics of Criminalistics, Fundamentals of Criminology, Fundamentals of Criminal Investigation, European Union and International Criminal Law and Criminal Proceedings e.t.c.). In the curriculum it can be seen that practicum is intended in the field of criminal law: Practicum in an investigative institution. The content of the courses is balanced and includes the acquisition of competences necessary for the career development as an investigator.

It is clear that in the field of criminal law PBASP Pre-trial investigation has much more study courses and ECTS than other fields of law (theory, civil law, state law and international law): 12 study courses (including practicum and bachelor's thesis in criminal law) with 102 ECTS are devoted to the field of criminal law, while 10 study courses with 39 ECTS are devoted to the other fields of law. It is understandable why the focus in the PBASP Pre-trial investigation is more on criminal law, because it fully meets the standard of the Investigator profession. This certainly does not reduce the compliance of the program with either the professional standard or the educational standard. Students graduating from this program acquire sufficient knowledge for the work environment that will be necessary.

However, there is a possibility that those students who plan to continue their studies in a master's degree programme and take the Lawyers Unified exam may lack knowledge and skills in other branches of law besides criminal law.

2.2.3. The recording of the assessment of the students' learning outcomes takes place in the respective study course e-environment. The UL has formulated the learning outcomes for each PBASP Pre-trial investigation and for each study course as a set of knowledge, skills and competencies (Annex 20.4 Mapping learning outcomes of the professional bachelor's study program

"Pre-trial Investigation").

Strategic Supervisory Council of the ISA Consortium has strengthened the requirements for the faculty involved in the implementation of the study programme by stipulating that at least 50% of the faculty who implement the practical parts of the study courses must have at least 5 years of practical work experience in the last 15 years, which is equivalent to conducting practical research (SAR, p. 216).

2.2.4. The internship is provided in various investigating authorities in Latvia, e.g., the State Police, the Prison Administration, the Internal Security Bureau, the State Border Guard, the NAF Military Police, the State Revenue Service, the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau. Since the study programme is implemented within the framework of the ISA Consortium with the specific aim of training a certain number of specialists for work in investigating institutions. 100% of all students are provided with internships in an investigating institution (SAR, p.217).

The content of the internship, the rules for the formatting and defence of the internship report are laid down in the Internship Regulations, the relevant internship course description and the internship programme.

The internship is closely supervised and guided by internship supervisors (one from the LF, one from the internship institution). Its successful implementation ensures full acquisition of practical skills, ensuring that the study programme is closely integrated with current developments in law enforcement practice, with practitioners making a significant contribution and assuming responsibility for the training of young specialists (SAR, p. 218).

Internship in an investigating institution is a stage of consolidation, deepening and validation of the theoretical knowledge acquired by students in the field of criminal law (criminal law, criminal procedure, criminology, forensic science), a part of a unified study process.

The aim of the internship is to advance students' knowledge and skills in criminal investigations and to prepare them for independent work in the investigator profession. The amount of the internship is 30 CP (Annex 21.4 "Curriculum of the Professional bachelor's study programme "PRE-TRIAL INVESTIGATION"). It fully complies with the educational standard requirements - internship of at least 30 CP (see Annex 17.4 "Compliance of the professional bachelor's study programme "Pre-trial Investigation" with the State Education Standard").

The evaluation of the State Examination (bachelor's thesis and qualification examination) is carried out by the State Examination Board, which includes representatives of the FL, representatives of the partners of the ISA consortium, as well as representatives of the investigation and prosecution authorities as the supervisory body of the investigation authorities (SAR, p. 213).

The delivery mechanism of the PBASP Pre-trial investigation ensures the achievement of learning outcomes, incorporating the principles of student-centred education. A student-oriented approach is ensured already in the process of developing the PBASP Pre-trial investigation, paying special attention to the meaningful formulation of learning outcomes. Student-centred methods dominate the learning process. The study process is supported by methods that facilitate students' communication in the implementation of study tasks, solving real issues pertaining to the field, modelling situations. Teaching staff mainly use methods that encourage students' active participation, critical thinking and reflection. The e-learning environment is used in the study process and to promote independent studies (SAR, p. 215).

In the process of implementing the PBASP Pre-trial investigation, a regular dialogue is carried out between teaching staff and students about the content, forms and methods of organizing learning in each study course. The assessment criteria for the study course are known to students. After each test, lecturers discuss the criteria for the assessments received. Students receive support and feedback from teaching staff during the study process. There are established consultation times when students can discuss issues of interest to them with lecturers. The diversity of students' learning needs is taken into account in the study process, choosing pedagogical methods that promote students' motivation for learning, self-examination and participation in the study process (SAR, p. 215).

2.2.5. Not applicable

2.2.6. The first students' final theses are scheduled for the spring semester of the academic year 2026/2027 (SAR, p. 218), so it is not possible to perform their analysis.

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

The content of the study courses, practice and final exam included in the PBASP Pre-trial investigation proves that the programme can be recognized as a criminal law specialization study programme, which at the same time provides an opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competences for the further learning of the Lawyer profession.

The evaluation of the purpose and results of the programme shows that the content of the programme and the content of the study courses fully correspond to the purpose and results of the programme and that the programme is oriented to the needs of the labour market and scientific trends in the field of science "Law".

The layout of the study courses in the curriculum is logical and sequential, the study methods contribute to the results of the study courses and the achievement of the goal set by the study PBASP Pre-trial investigation.

The content of the PBASP Pre-trial investigation and the content of study courses correspond to the purpose and results of the programme. The study courses form a unified whole and help to achieve the determined study results of the study programme.

The PBASP Pre-trial investigation meets the formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions, and Cabinet of Ministers regulations, issued in accordance with the law. However, currently the curriculum lacks integration of some interdisciplinary competencies. No legal norm requires the compulsory acquisition of such competences, however, their inclusion in the programme would increase the employability of programme graduates in the labor market. The content of the courses includes the acquisition of competencies necessary for the career development as an investigator, more study courses and ECTS are planned for criminal law than for other fields of law together.

Strengths:

1) The PBASP Pre-trial investigation is well-designed for work in law enforcement institutions.

2) Students are guaranteed job opportunities in law enforcement institutions for at least five years after graduating from the PBASP Pre-trial investigation.

3) Employers are actively involved in keeping the PBASP Pre-trial investigation up-to-date according to labour market trends and needs.

Weaknesses:

1) Since the PBASP Pre-trial investigation is recognized as a criminal law specialization study programme, it is possible that the necessary knowledge in other areas required for passing the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer will not be acquired (if studies are continued in the master's study programme).

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

#### **Analysis**

2.3.1. The PBASP Pre-trial investigation is run by a joint effort of the ISA consortium. The consortium is pooling its resources, allowing for the flexible input of specialized lecturers (e.g. being recruited for special topics from the Police College) and using literature and forensic tools from all three consortium partners.

Within the FL all resources of the FL are readily available (for details see SAR, chapter 2.3 – 'Resources and Provision of the Study Programme', p. 50 ff). Starting off with the new study programme a short while ago students were enabled to study efficiently and independently. Constantly supplemented information resources, especially electronic databases which allow for up to date access to journals, articles, commentaries and rulings form a sufficient basis for study and research. The policy of constant review and updating of academic literature allows for a sufficient basis to achieve the aims of the study programme.

On top of the overall level of resourcing for implementing and upholding the PBASP Pre-trial investigation there are special needs and necessities to run such a highly specialized programme. Specific technical capacities for the study of forensic sciences, conducting investigative experiments need to be provided. Forensic equipment and tools for study purposes and examinations are available through a sharing mechanism between the partners of the ISA consortium (see Art. 3.4.15 of the Founding Agreement of the ISA Consortium). Necessary investments in infrastructure and information and teaching resources are covered by the State budget upon decision making of the consortium partners (see 4.6 of the ISA Consortium agreement) and are offered free of charge to all partners alike.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3 The necessary funds for the running of the PBASP Pre-trial investigation result from the state budget subsidy. PBASP Pre-trial investigation costs are calculated with a methodology, taking into account all different cost factors with percentage ratios, transparently broken down in the SAR p. 221, 222 (cost items and percentages of the grand total allocated to the different cost items). An additional figure shows in a graph the cost-effectiveness of the break-even point according to student figures and fees for all modes of delivery (FTI, PTI and PTE). At least 165 students need to be enrolled to be cost effective. Despite relatively high dropout rates, connected to primarily wrong expectations of students towards the challenges such a study programme poses, the very satisfactory enrollment figures guarantee that the minimum figure of students to make the programme cost effective will be reached at all times.

The full state-budget funding allows for the running of the PBASP Pre-trial investigation without support from other financial resources. State budget funding is used for all aspects of curriculum development. The UL Study Quality Improvement Fund could be used to obtain further funding if needed. Research funding for academic staff is also connected and financed by the development of the study programme.

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

For the PBASP Pre-trial Investigation there is as of now a sufficient basis of quality premises, literature, databases and forensic equipment, shared by the ISA consortium partners.

In talks with the PBASP Pre-trial investigation management, it was mentioned that specialized literature sources will be added to the library in due course to stack resources with study and research materials fit for the highly specialized curriculum parts of the near future study semesters.

Financially, the PBASP Pre-trial investigation, overall state budget funded and free of charge for those students that fulfill the criteria for a free study environment, is financially sound. Currently, relatively high drop-out rates are tackled with an initiative to even more intensively inform students about the prerequisites of the programme and its parameters. As the PBASP Pre-trial investigation is advertised and perceived as an excellent career opportunity there is no doubt that the projected student numbers will be reached.

Students have different opportunities to graduate at different stages, talking of furthering the studies to the Master level in the future. In talking to current students, they are well aware of the possibilities and challenges the programme poses.

Strengths:

- 1) The PBASP Pre-trial investigation is backed by the ISA consortium, sharing resources.
- 2) The PBASP Pre-trial investigation is well received by students and attractive for them because it offers a free of charge study and excellent career chances.
- 3) The study is state budget funded and resources will greatly be provided by state budget sources as well.
- 4) There is long-term financial stability.

5) There is no competition by other educational institutions for the consortium.

Weaknesses:

1) Library sources have to be replenished with all literature and possibly databases that are needed to meet the expectations of the highly specialized studies of pre-trial investigation.

2) The UL does not have adequate facilities and equipment for conducting various investigative trainings and experiments.

## **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Assessment is based on analysis of SAR materials, p. 50 ff., 218 ff. and discussions at the assessment visit. PBASP Pre-trial investigation has a stable and sufficient state funding.

Currently, the need for specialized literature and forensic equipment must be addressed within the premises of UL FL.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. Overall the UL FL teaching staff involved in the implementation of the PBASP Pre-trial investigation complies with requirements and regulatory enactments, as is explained in full detail in the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.) and documented throughout the relevant annexes (for discrepancies in the provided data and documentation please see chapter 1.4.). Table 6.4.1.1. shows that the majority of the teaching staff (43,8%) holds the highest academic positions (professor and associate professor), which due to the strict election procedure at the UL and the highly competitive election criteria ensures a high standard of the implementation of the study process. There is only a slight difference in the regulatory (30%) and the actual proportion (36,1%) of involvement of associate professors in the study programme implementation, but in light of the majority of teaching staff being elected to the highest academic positions this is of no major relevance.

The main idea of the Consortium “Internal Security Academy” to ensure mutual involvement of teaching staff among the consortium partners ensures a well-balanced distribution between theoretical and practical learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. This is well reflected in the study program design and on the level of single study courses. There are however discrepancies between the UL FL teaching staff listed in Annex 6 and the PBASP Pre-trial investigation course description with regard to the teaching staff of courses (both in the English language version and the national language), which is then also reflected in lack of CVs in Annex 7 and lack of publication lists in Annex 9. Irrespective of whether and how the said discrepancies might impact an overall analysis on the level of teaching staff’s qualifications, those CVs and publication lists available demonstrate a overwhelmingly high level of teaching staff’s qualifications, experience, research production and relevance for the study field.

The compulsory readings as provided in the single course descriptions in several instances amount to over 1.500 pages, which does not correspond to the planned workload, nor to the ECTS for such courses. This might be a reflection of the teaching staff's lack of didactical competences to realistically assess students' planned workload against the backdrop of actual workload, or merely a consequence of the course descriptions not specifying particular chapters of the listed mandatory course readings which would amount up to the planned workload. Based on the assessment visit discussions with teaching staff the latter seems to be the case, whereby teaching staff is said to provide more detailed information to students about the actual chapters to be studied within the framework of the lectures. Nevertheless, the compulsory reading list should as a rule be specified enough for (prospective) students to realistically assess their expected workload before they enroll in the study programme, not only at the beginning of the lectures.

These are all minor points of well-intended critique and do not diminish the overall highly positive assessment of the teaching staff's qualifications and competences, which are strongly valued by students (based on the feedback received during the assessment visit), especially with regards to their leading positions in the most prominent judicial, police and governmental institutions of Latvia.

2.4.2. According to the SAR there have been no significant changes in the composition of the teaching staff since the PBASP Pre-trial investigation was licenced (SAR chapter 3.4.2.). This does not seem to be fully accurate when comparing the teaching staff listed in the PBASP Pre-trial investigation course descriptions (esp. the English language version, but also the national language version) and Annex 6. For example the two criminology courses (Fundamentals of Criminology; Advanced course in criminology) in the course description identify teaching staff that is not listed in Annex 6, whereas the relevant teaching staff listed in Annex 6 is not identified in the course description, only in the relevant curriculum annex. This is no isolated finding and indicates that there has been a change in the composition of the teaching staff - whether or not this has a negative, positive or no effect is challenging to assess without UN FL having provided the relevant information. At least for the above example the change has to be assessed as positive, whereby it would be sensible to include the new information in the course description and thus upgrade the compulsory reading list (in line with that of the criminology course taught in the law programme), esp. to include national criminological literature.

The composition of the teaching staff as described in table 6.4.2.1. of the SAR shows that it is in line with the necessary requirements. On a side note it needs to be stressed that apparently doctoral students engage in teaching activities, but that their employment status in this regard as teaching staff is not consistently regulated, as discussions during the assessment visit indicated. The share of teaching staff holding a doctoral degree is commendable.

2.4.3. Not applicable

2.4.4. The lecturers involved in the PBASP Pre-trial investigation have a rich volume of publications (Annex: 9 publications Study field Law 2024.docx). Almost all lecturers have international publications indexed in databases Scopus and/or Web of Science. Those few lecturers who do not have publications or have only national publications have more than five years of work experience in the work environment related to the taught course of study (Annex No. 7, CV EUROPASS Curriculum Vitae).

However, to enhance clarity and comprehensiveness from UL's perspective, further details regarding improvements in the annexes and the provided information are outlined in section 1.4. of the expert report.

2.4.5. There are clear mechanisms foreseen for ensuring mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, both on the level of the PBASP Pre-trial investigation as well as on the level of specific study courses. The heads of departments for each study course appoint a study course supervisor who ensures that in case several teaching staff is involved in implementing a course uniform teaching methods and requirements are being implemented. Clearly the heads of departments in this regard also act as supervisors of the course supervisors, whereby it is not clear where the responsibilities of the heads of departments start and end or overlap with the responsibilities of the study programme director, which might be particularly relevant for the study programme at hand that is being implemented in cooperation with several partners and their teaching staff. Practically this seems to be addressed on a daily basis in a well-functioning manner, but the assessment visit discussions indicated that there lies great responsibility on the part of the study program director, but no actual enforcement power. The assessment visit (at least based on the sample involved) did however generate the impression that the UL FL is a highly collegial institution and that fruitful cooperation is the rule, whereby in exceptional circumstances where issues might arise the relevant lead-staff acts coordinated and affirmative to induce necessary corrections.

The current student-staff ratio (3) is not really informative as the programme runs only for one year.

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

The teaching staff is overwhelmingly qualified with a commendable share of teaching staff elected to highest academic positions at the UL FL. The teaching staff's profiles (Annex 7) show that these are not only leading experts in law, but particularly also in criminal law, criminal investigation and criminology, which is of particular importance for the study programmes' goal, its tasks and results. The qualifications of the teaching staff are fully compliant with the relevant provisions, whereby the only reservation in this regard relates to the discrepancies about the teaching staff provided across different annexes and data (see introduction to chapter 1.4.).

There have clearly been certain changes to the composition of the teaching staff which follows from the documentation made available, whereby only 38 of the UN FL teaching staff is listed in the english language study course descriptions and 66 in the national language course descriptions. Although the discrepancies are significant, their impact on the overall assessment of the teaching staff is moderate, since clearly the teaching staff represents Latvia's leading (criminal) law experts and crime investigation professionals in (mainly the highest) elected academic positions. The responsibilities of lead-staff (head of departments, programme director, cours supervisor) tasked with ensuring cooperation between the teaching staff are clearly defined, but seem to be overlapping in certain aspects. This is not necessarily a weakness but could even be a strength, but it quite likely might be duplicating workflows and administrative tasks, which would otherwise fall within one competence.

Strengths:

- 1) Highly qualified teaching staff with strong professional experience and competences necessary for successfully implementing the study programmes' goal, tasks and results.
- 2) Adequate and timely response to the increase of demand for criminal investigators on the labour market and meaningful cooperation via the ISA Consortium.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Lack of realistically planned and transparently provided workload within many of the study courses that does not match the course's ECTS.

## Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The assessment is based on the analysis as provided for criteria 2.4.1.-2.4.5. and based on data provided in the relevant annexes as cited in sections 2.4.1.-2.4.5., while thus relying on the findings of the assessment visit and open source data (e.g. practical experience of academic teaching staff in cases this was not included in the relevant annexes).

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex 17.4 "Compliance of the professional bachelor's study programme "Pre-trial Investigation" with the State Education Standard" affirms that programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 13.06.2023 Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education". However, currently the curriculum lacks integration of some interdisciplinary competencies. No legal norm requires the compulsory acquisition of such competences, however, their inclusion in the program would increase the employability of programme graduates in the labor market.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex 18.2 "Compliance of the study programme with the occupational standard - Investigator's (in criminal law)" affirms that PBASP Pre-trial investigation complies with Investigator's (in criminal law) occupational standard, agreed at the meeting of the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council on Vocational Education and Employment of 12 October 2022, Minutes No. 6.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided course descriptions in Annex 22.4 “Descriptions of courses of the professional bachelor’s study programme “Pre-trial investigation” are available in both Latvian and English languages, although the PBASP Pre-trial investigation is implemented only in Latvian.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The diploma example available in Annex 15.4 “DIPLOMA\_PBSP\_Pre-trial investigation.zip” is compliant with the Cabinet of Ministers 16.04.2013 Regulation No. 202 “Procedures by which documents certifying higher education recognised by the State shall be issued”.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex “24.04.2024 - 20-13\_46 - Declaration - Latvian language of the academic.edoc.pdf” affirms that the knowledge of Latvian language of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the PBASP Pre-trial investigation complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 08.03.2022 Regulation No. 157 “Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language”.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "Examples of agreement.zip" containing study agreements fully complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 23.01.2007 Regulation No. 70 "Rules to be included in the study agreement".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided information in Annex "DECLARATION.ZIP" (Declaration of Rector of University of Latvia G. Bērziņš) affirms that students are provided with opportunities to continue their education in the UL academic bachelor study programme Law (43380) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. However, taking into account that this is a professional study programme, the UL should provide students with the opportunity to continue their education in a study programme of the same level, possibly by concluding agreements with: Riga Stradins University on professional bachelor's study programme Police work, or with Turība University on professional bachelor's study programme Organizational security.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "Refund and Compensation Policy\_EN.docx" states that the UL shall guarantee compensation for students if study programme is not accredited due to the action (activity or failure to act) of the UL or the licence of the study programme is revoked and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The submitted documents certify that the requirement specified in clause 2.3 of the agreement "Agreement establishing consortium "Internal Security Academy" (ISA)" has been fulfilled: within the consortium Higher Education Institutions, by mutual agreement, will develop, license and, from September 1, 2023, implement six study programmes at the expense of the state budget, including - Professional Bachelor Study Program "Pre-trial investigation" (LKI-6).

**Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

PBASP Pre-trial investigation meets all the formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher

Education Institutions, and Cabinet of Ministers regulations, issued in accordance with the law.

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

PBASP Pre-trial investigation meets all the formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Cabinet of Ministers "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education". PBASP Pre-trial investigation implementation is possible in all declared implementation options - full time studies, part time studies and part time extramural studies in Latvian. There are some doubts about the specific premises and equipment available at UL, but this could be corrected by closer cooperation with the other HEIs of the consortium. UL affirms that students are provided with opportunities to continue their education in the UL academic bachelor study programme Law (43380) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. However, taking into account that this is a professional study programme, UL should provide students with the additional opportunity to continue their education in a study programme of the same level, possibly by concluding agreements with: Riga Stradins University on professional bachelor's study program Police work, or with Turība University on professional bachelor's study programme Organizational security.

Strengths:

- 1) Employers are actively involved in keeping the study programme up to date according to labour market trends and needs.
- 2) Students are guaranteed job opportunities in law enforcement institutions for at least five years after graduating from the PBASP Pre-trial investigation.
- 3) Highly qualified teaching staff with strong professional experience and competences necessary for successfully implementing the study programmes' goal, tasks and results.
- 4) Adequate and timely response to the increase of demand for criminal investigators on the labour market and meaningful cooperation via the ISA Consortium.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Since the PBASP Pre-trial investigation is recognized as a criminal law specialization study programme, probably the necessary knowledge in other areas, including skills acquisition during an internship, required for passing the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer will not be acquired (if studies are continued in the master's study programme).
- 2) The UL does not have adequate facilities and equipment for conducting various investigative training and experiments.
- 3) Lack of realistically planned and transparently provided workload within many of the study courses that does not match the course's ECTS.
- 4) Library sources have to be replenished with all literature and possibly databases that are needed to meet the expectations of the highly specialized studies of pre-trial investigation.

5) High attrition rates, particularly among first-year students, highlight potential challenges in student preparedness and the adequacy of initial support systems.

6) The absence of more flexible study formats, such as blended or remote learning options, restricts accessibility for non-traditional students, including those already employed in related fields seeking professional development.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Pre-trial Investigation"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Pre-trial Investigation"**

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

1) Replenish literature with those sources that are needed to allow for study and research of highly specialized courses that would not appear outside the 'pre-trial investigation' studies.

2) Consider the possibility of adding additional optional courses in other areas of law and offering an internship to those who do not continue their studies in the master's study programme "Pre-trial investigation" also in other areas of law, not only criminal law.

3) All programmes' study course descriptions should be systematically reviewed with regards the scope of the obligatory course readings, which need to be realistically planned and transparently announced (by indicating specific chapters or page numbers) in order to match the students' envisaged workload and thus the courses' ECTS allocation.

4) Implement targeted academic advising, peer mentoring, and skills workshops for first-year students to improve preparedness and reduce attrition rates.

#### **Long-term recommendations**

1) Provide the necessary premises and equipment for the specific needs of the PBASP Pre-trial investigation.

2) Develop blended and remote learning options to provide greater accessibility for non-traditional students and those employed in related fields, ensuring flexibility without compromising quality.

## **II - "Law" ASSESSMENT**

### **II - "Law" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

2.1.1. The Bachelor's (First-cycle) Study Programme "Law" 43380 (BASP Law) demonstrates strong compliance with the study field "Law" (study field). The BASP Law content, focusing on the five classical sub-branches of legal science, aligns closely with the legal field's requirements. Over 90% of courses are explicitly dedicated to law, ensuring students acquire the comprehensive foundational and specialized knowledge required for further education and professional practice. (SAR, p. 127).

After evaluating the information included in the SAR, as well as receiving information from the programme director during an on-site visit, the experts concluded that the BASP Law fully complies with the study field Law.

2.1.2. The title “Law”, and degree to be obtained “Bachelor’s Degree in Law” , accurately reflects the academic and professional orientation of the programme, aligning with its aims and objectives to provide comprehensive legal education. The BASP Law code, 43380, adheres to the Latvian education classification, where the first two digits (“43”) signify a first-cycle higher education programme, and the final three digits (“380”) correspond to the thematic area of law. This classification confirms the BASP Law’s alignment with Latvian and European standards for higher education (SAR, p. 127).

The academic degree awarded—Bachelor’s Degree in Law—along with the programme’s objectives and learning outcomes ensures that students are equipped with foundational and specialized legal knowledge. These elements foster critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and professional competencies, essential for progression into advanced legal studies or professional practice.

As outlined in the SAR (p. 128), the BASP Law aims to develop students’ ability to apply legal theories in practical contexts, analyze legal issues critically, and contribute meaningfully to the legal profession. Objectives include promoting students’ competitiveness in the labour market, fostering independent learning, and encouraging a deeper understanding of ethical and professional standards in law. The programme’s learning outcomes align seamlessly with these objectives, ensuring coherence across all parameters.

The programme spans 180 ECTS credits and is structured over three years of full-time study. Part-time study options are also available, allowing for extended durations to accommodate diverse student needs. The structure of the BASP Law balances theoretical instruction, practical application, and independent study, adhering to European higher education frameworks. Multiple study formats, including full-time and part-time, ensure accessibility for both traditional and non-traditional students (SAR, p. 128).

Admission requirements for the BASP Law include a secondary education qualification and additional criteria prioritizing proficiency in languages, mathematics, and history. These requirements are designed to ensure that students possess the foundational skills necessary for success in legal education and align with the demands of the legal field.

The primary implementation language is Latvian, which reflects the national focus of the programme. However, introducing courses or streams in English could enhance international collaboration and accessibility, making the programme more attractive to a broader audience, including international students.

Overall, the title, code, degree, and parameters of the study programme are well-integrated, effectively supporting its aims to provide high-quality legal education. The programme aligns with both national and European standards and demonstrates a clear interrelation between its aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and other parameters. Exploring additional language options and study formats could further enhance its accessibility and global competitiveness.

2.1.3. The BASP Law has undergone several adjustments during the accreditation period, reflecting the UL’s commitment to continuous improvement and alignment with evolving educational standards. These changes, while maintaining the core structure and content, ensure the programme

remains relevant and adaptable to student needs and societal demands.

Key adjustments include the transition to the ECTS, ensuring compliance with European standards. The credit reallocation process was executed meticulously, with no changes to the substantive content of courses. Adjustments were limited to technical recalibrations of credit volumes, ensuring that the workload and course outcomes were appropriately aligned. For instance, credits for courses such as “Administrative Process Law” and “Labour Law” were rounded to meet ECTS requirements without altering their academic scope (SAR, p. 126-127).

The BASP Law is currently delivered in Latvian, which aligns with its focus on preparing legal professionals for the national context. However, introducing an English-language stream could enhance the programme’s accessibility and international appeal, fostering greater inclusivity for international students and aligning with global educational trends. No formal steps toward this development were noted during the assessment period, but its consideration could strengthen the programme’s profile.

As part of the programme’s refinement, the course “Providing of Legal Advice” was transferred from the professional master’s programme to the bachelor’s level, increasing opportunities for undergraduates to engage in practical legal activities (SAR, p. 126). This adjustment addresses reduced interest in the course at the master’s level and enhances practical skill acquisition during undergraduate studies.

Overall, the UL FL has implemented justified corrections to the study programme that maintain its alignment with academic and professional standards. However, further consideration of additional language options, new delivery formats, and enhanced accessibility could strengthen the programme’s relevance and inclusivity.

2.1.4. The BASP Law aligns with Latvia’s economic and social priorities by addressing the demand for skilled legal professionals. The programme provides graduates with a strong foundation in classical legal disciplines, as well as opportunities for specialization in areas such as civil law, criminal law, administrative law, and European Union law. This breadth of knowledge and training prepares graduates for diverse career paths or further academic pursuits, ensuring the programme’s relevance to both public and private sectors. Its focus on legal education directly supports Latvia’s strategic objectives in promoting the rule of law, access to justice, and governance improvements.

Employment outcomes for graduates are strong, with over 80% employed within a year of graduation. Approximately 75% of employed graduates work in fields directly related to their education, demonstrating the programme’s ability to meet professional demands. Graduates are employed in legal practice, public administration, and private consultancy or continue their education in professional master’s programmes (SAR, p. 129). These results confirm the programme’s effectiveness in preparing students for professional roles and its alignment with labour market needs.

The number of enrolled students has remained stable over the years, reflecting the programme’s consistent popularity and reputation. Specifically, the programme enrolled 450 students in 2019, 448 in 2020, 443 in 2021, and 436 in 2022. A slight decline in new enrollments occurred in 2023 (down to 415) due to the introduction of the “Pre-trial Investigation” programme, which attracted some prospective students. Nevertheless, this shift has not significantly impacted the programme’s overall performance or reputation (SAR, p. 130).

However, dropout rates, particularly between the first and second years, remain an area of concern. On average, 20–25% of first-year students do not continue their studies into the second year, with the highest rate recorded in 2021 at 28% (SAR, p. 131). Students commonly cite the academic rigor of the programme and changing interests as reasons for discontinuing their studies. The faculty has implemented measures such as enhanced introductory sessions, academic advising, and mentorship programmes to address this issue. Nevertheless, additional support during the critical first year, such as tutoring and skills workshops, could further improve retention. Ensuring better communication of these interventions and monitoring their outcomes would help stakeholders understand the efforts being made and foster transparency.

Feedback from employers about emerging competencies and practical skills is not consistently incorporated into curriculum updates. While the BASP Law curriculum provides a strong foundation, stakeholders during the assessment visit emphasized the importance of aligning educational content with current industry demands, such as legal technology and compliance management. A structured mechanism for integrating employer feedback into curriculum reviews would strengthen the programme's ability to remain competitive and industry-relevant.

Graduate employability is supported by the programme's comprehensive curriculum, yet there is room for improvement. During the assessment visit different stakeholders have also emphasized the importance of these skills, suggesting that targeted updates to the curriculum would enhance graduate outcomes and competitiveness.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The BASP Law demonstrates strong alignment with national and institutional priorities, offering a comprehensive curriculum that equips students with the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary for legal careers. The programme's structure, duration, and credit system are well-justified, adhering to European and national standards. The transition to ECTS has been successfully implemented without compromising the programme's integrity.

However, areas for improvement remain. These include enhancing support mechanisms to address student attrition, particularly during the first year, and ensuring better communication of programme updates and revisions to stakeholders.

Overall, the programme effectively prepares students for advanced studies or immediate entry into the legal profession, maintaining its relevance to societal and labour market needs.

Strengths:

- 1) Strong alignment with national economic and social priorities, supporting the development of a highly skilled legal workforce.
- 2) Comprehensive curriculum that provides a robust foundation in classical legal disciplines and offers opportunities for specialization.
- 3) High graduate employability, with over 80% employed within a year of graduation and 75%

working in roles directly related to their field of study.

4) Stable enrolments figures reflecting the programme's consistent popularity and reputation.

5) Programme design encourages a clear progression to professional master's degrees, further enhancing career prospects.

Weaknesses:

1) Lack of comprehensive mechanisms to track and mitigate high dropout rates and thus first-year attrition more proactively.

2) Feedback from employers about emerging competencies and practical skills is not consistently incorporated into curriculum updates.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The BASP Law is designed with due regard to the interrelationship of the study courses, thus enabling the study programme to achieve its aim. Initially, the BASP Law includes more general courses, then moving on to more complex and more specific study courses. As can be seen from the BASP Law plan (Annex 21.1 Curriculum of the Academic bachelor's study program "LAW"), in the 1st semester in the part A general study courses are taught (English or German Law terminology, Legal writing and analysis, The History of Latvian Law, Theory of Law, etc.). At the end of the studies, more complex and more specific study courses on law are taught, for example, in the 5th semester, study courses are taught in the main areas of law, such as Civil Procedure, EU law, Criminal Procedure, International Private Law: Conflict Norms, etc.

The BASP Law meets the formal requirements on state education standard, set forth in the Cabinet of Ministers 13.05.2014 Regulation No. 240 "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education". The comparison of programme indicators with the requirements specified in the Standard has been carried out in the Annex "17\_1\_Compliance\_of\_BSP\_Law\_with\_standard.docx". Since the programme is academic, there is no need to compare it to any professional standard or professional qualification requirements.

The assessment of the BASP Law aim and outcomes shows that the content of the programme, the content of the study courses in general fully achieves the programme's aim and outcomes, and that the programme is oriented to the needs of the labour market and the law science. Compliance of the study content with the development trends of the industry, labour market and science is controlled by the director of the BASP Law and the study direction council, which also includes representatives of employers (SAR, p. 131).

There is an opportunity for students to participate in moot courts, which provide valuable practical experience. However, despite encouragement from the faculty, not all students can take part in the simulations of the court proceedings. During the assessment visit, stakeholders, particularly the students, suggested enhancing the curriculum to ensure broader accessibility to the development of the soft competences. They emphasized the importance of integrating essential soft skills into the curriculum. Skills such as, for instance, public speaking, negotiation were identified as crucial for

preparing future lawyers to succeed in diverse professional environments. By embedding these competencies into the curriculum, the faculty can ensure that all students, regardless of their participation in extracurricular activities, acquire the practical and interpersonal skills necessary for a successful legal career.

#### 2.2.2. Not applicable

2.2.3. The study implementation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the BASP Law. Student-centered learning and teaching principles are considered. Oral, written and combined methods of study delivery and assessment are used during the study courses and examinations. The student-centered approach is observed in updating the study programmes and the respective study courses, paying special attention to meaningful formulation of learning outcomes, thus promoting the dialogue between teaching staff and students on the content of studies, forms and methods of organization (SAR, p. 134-135). Well-formulated learning outcomes, on the other hand, promote students' understanding and co-responsibility for their own learning, self-evaluation, and understanding of the assessment they receive. In the study process, lecturers use methods, forms of assessment and evaluation criteria that are consistent with the study aim and the planned learning outcomes.

The BASP Law includes the study course Bachelor Paper, and it is indicated that it is implemented by all teaching staff who supervise undergraduate work. As part of this study course, the student consults with the supervisor of the bachelor's thesis, as well as listens to a lecture on writing the bachelor's thesis. However, there is no planned preliminary evaluation of the bachelor's thesis at the faculty level, before the defense of the thesis in the State commission.

2.2.4. The BASP Law does not include opportunities for students to learn practical skills through internship. Although It is not a mandatory requirement for an academic study programme, it would be advisable to include the opportunity to do a short internship in the BASP Law programme. It would allow students who do not have any practical skills to learn them in a real work environment. This internship could be offered as one of the elective courses.

#### 2.2.5. Not applicable

2.2.6. Bachelor's theses are written on topics that are topical and relevant to practice. As described in the SAR (p. 136-137), the choice of themes for bachelor's theses is well advised by the cooperation partners, e.g. the Ministry of Justice, Supreme Court, the Ombudsman, the Prison Administration, etc. The responsiveness of these cooperation institutions in providing students with information support (in the form of materials and advice) is commendable. In response to an incentive from the Ministry of Justice, the FL sends the Ministry a list of the best defended final theses (7-10 grades) each year, and several state institutions have expressed interest in reading the theses on topics relevant to its practice. The research carried out as part of the final thesis thus also has practical applications.

The analysis of the topics of the written and defended theses proves that the topics of bachelor theses are relevant to the law field and correspond to the study programme in law. Thesis topics correspond to all five areas of law for which the Unified Lawyers Exam is taken (after graduation from the master's programme). As indicated in SAR (p. 137) in the last five years 254 bachelor's theses have been defended in Criminal Law, 246 in Civil Law, 98 in State Law, 81 in International and EU Law, 49 in Theory and History of Law.

The assessments of the bachelor's theses show that excellent (10 points) and outstanding (9 points) grades can only be obtained in a few cases, because the examination boards have set high standards. A high positive rating at the FL must be earned by demonstrating a high level of expertise, especially given that the assessors are the most recognised experts in their field. The aggregated information shows that the predominant ratings are 8 (very good), 7 (good) and 6 (almost good). Every year, the bachelor's theses defended at the FL also win many awards in the research competition of the weekly professional law journal "Jurista Vārds" (SAR, p. 138).

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

The content of the BASP Law is topical, the content of the study courses is interconnected and complementary, meets the goals of the programme and ensures the achievement of study results, as well as complies with the trends of law science and the labour market. The BASP Law complies with the national regulatory enactments - the national standard of academic education. The content of the programme, the content of the study courses fully correspond to the purpose and results of the programme, and that the programme is oriented to the needs of the labour market and scientific trends in the science sector "Law". The compliance of the study content with the development trends of the industry, the labour market and science is controlled by the director of the study programme and the study direction council, which also includes representatives of employers. The BASP Law was created taking into account the interrelationship of study courses, thus allowing the study programme to achieve its goal.

The BASP Law forms a single set of study courses for obtaining the qualification of a lawyer, therefore it is expected that the graduates of the programme will continue their studies in the professional master's study programme "Law". The BASP Law is the first in which students learn the basics of law, which will be necessary to successfully pass the unified qualification exam for lawyers (after completing the master's study programme). Therefore, the BASP Law includes study courses that not only meet the requirements of the educational standard, but also the goal necessary for obtaining the Lawyer profession - to prepare students for the successful passing of the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer in all five areas of law: civil law, criminal law, state law, international law and legal theory and history.

The BASP Law does not include opportunities for students to learn practical skills through an internship (optional). It is not a mandatory requirement in the academic study programme, but could be included as an elective course. The opportunity to test their knowledge application skills in one of the law enforcement institutions or in another organization or business environment would be useful for those students who do not plan to continue their studies in a master's study programme.

The study courses form a unified whole and help to achieve the determined study results of the study programme. The arrangement of study courses in the curriculum is logical and sequential. Study methods contribute to the results of the study courses and the achievement of the goal set by the study programme.

The BASP Law does not include opportunities for students to learn practical skills through an internship (optional)

Strengths:

1) The BASP Law prepares the strong basis for successfully passing the Uniform state professional

qualification examination of a lawyer.

2) Highly qualified teaching staff with strong professional experience and competences necessary for successfully implementing the study programmes' goal, tasks and results.

Weaknesses:

1) Insufficient integration of essential soft skills, such as public speaking and negotiation, in the curriculum.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

### **Analysis**

2.3.1. The BASP Law does not require specific resources concerning study and research apart from the information hub, being the library with printed materials and the databases. Library resources, their management and their maintenance are thoroughly presented in chapters 2.3.1 - 2.3.3 of the SAR (p. 53-60).

The available sources, especially the much in use databases and eBook section (students primary choice of information as was established during the assessment visit) guarantee a successful and sustainable implementation of the study programme. Independent studies and research by students in different modes (being present or acting remote) are readily available.

The study base is regularly checked for outdated materials and editions on topical research materials and replenished accordingly. The information stock, both printed versions and electronic sources are believed to be fully sufficient for study and research of the programme. Teaching staff can and does at any given time suggest to purchase new materials according to certain courses or to much demand from the students side.

The FL organizes for newly enrolled students through the structural units of the library introductory sessions explaining how to make best use of the study and research resources on offer.

Publicly available court rulings are online accessible. In addition the FL is part of a professional network that enables students, working on specific topics to avail of data and information of public administration institutions, such as decisions of authorities.

2.3.2. Not applicable

2.3.3. The student base consists of a considerable number of students, consisting of currently 114 budget-funded and 684 tuition fee-based students in all modes of delivery (full-time studies, part-

time intramural studies and part-time extramural studies) (SAR, p. 139).

The overall costs of the BASP Law are calculated and broken down in cost factors according to a self-developed UL methodology. The calculation of specific 'Study Field Funding' allows for reliable forecasts concerning cost structure and the planned number of students.

As energy costs, inflation and pay rises for staff led to a considerable rise in costs from 2023 onward, tuition fees in 2024 had to be raised in line with the real cost. State subsidy already has been well below the cost of the programme. The fee raise is calculated with the expertise of the Finance Department and discussed with and approved by the Student Council.

Based on the cost structure and the total number of students, the cost of the programme in its different modes of delivery is calculated. Given the relatively high number of 114 budget-funded students not reaching the threshold of being cost-effective, the programme in the full-time study mode would need almost 1000 enrolled fee-paying students to cross-subsidize the financial loss for state-funded places.

For part-time intramural studies the calculation shows that 180 enrolled students would be sufficient to reach break-even. For part-time extramural studies 150 fee-paying students are needed to be cost-effective. These figures are being exceeded.

All in all the total revenue of BASP Law in all study modes has a positive balance, but the full-time intramural mode is unprofitable and needs cross-subsidizing. As long as the student ratios of all study modes roughly stay as they are, the programme is financially sound.

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

BASP Law is well received and smoothly run with constantly high student figures. Study and research resources are sufficiently in place and regularly updated. In the discussions with the panel of experts some students voiced that in courses with a high demand for latest edition printed textbooks, the number of provided volumes for loaning out is sometimes not sufficient for the huge demand. However it was conceded that complimenting eBook sources would make up for shortages in printed volumes.

The overall satisfaction of students and graduates with the resources situation of BASP Law, allowing for effective studying and research is high.

In terms of financing the programme, the constant cross-subsidizing of the full-time studies, run on an insufficient state-budget is a matter of concern and puts pressure on the other study modes to exceed constantly to be able to close financial gaps.

However, this problem can't be solved by the UL FL initiative. It is hoped that the state financing scheme will be changed in the near future, allotting lump sums to the HEIs and allowing them to find their own mode of distribution internally. The FL hopes that under such a new financing regime the burden of cross-subsidizing can be eased.

The rise in tuition fees is inevitable to cover higher costs. The calculation for the rise is transparently shared with the representatives of the students.

Strengths:

- 1) High in demand first-cycle programme.
- 2) Sufficient library resources allowing for study and research.
- 3) Financially stable.

Weaknesses:

none

### **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The BASP “Law” is well run based on a good concept, allowing for very good study results. It is financially stable.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. Overall the UL FL teaching staff involved in the implementation of the BASP Law complies with requirements and regulatory enactments, as is explained in full detail in the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.) and documented throughout the relevant annexes (for discrepancies in the provided data and documentation please see chapter 1.4.). Table 3.4.2.1. in the SAR shows that the majority of the teaching staff consistently throughout the 5-year reporting period holds the highest academic positions (professor and associate professor), which due to the strict election procedure at the UL and the highly competitive election criteria ensures a high standard of the implementation of the study process. There is also a high share of involvement of associate professors in the study programme implementation, as well as an even slightly higher share of lectures. There is a slight decline in teaching staff with a doctoral degree, but for many of the features of the study program this does not seem to be of a negative effect, as a strong focus is placed on legal practice throughout the study process. 52 teaching staff are involved in the implementation of the programme, including 11 professors, 6 associate professors, 12 assistant professors, 14 lecturers and 9 university teachers.

It needs to be stressed that there is a high positive assessment of the teaching staff’s qualifications and competences, which are also strongly valued by students (based on the feedback received during the assessment visit, as well as systematically collected through student surveys), especially with regards to their leading positions in the most prominent judicial, police and governmental institutions of Latvia.

2.4.2. According to the SAR there have been no significant changes in the composition of the

teaching staff during the reporting period. This does not seem to be fully accurate when comparing the teaching staff listed in the study programme's course descriptions (especially the English language version, but also the national language version) and Annex 6. The slight changes in teaching staff composition according to the SAR (chapter 3.4.2.) have had no significant impact on the quality of the study programme, which is confirmed by the student survey results that are overwhelmingly positive throughout the years. This finding has also been confirmed during the assessment visit, esp. through the discussions with all the relevant stakeholders.

#### 2.4.3. Not applicable

2.4.4. The lecturers involved in the BASP Law have a rich volume of publications (Annex: 9 publications Study field Law 2024.docx). Almost all lecturers have international publications indexed in databases Scopus and/or Web of Science. Those few lecturers who do not have publications or have only national publications have more than five years of work experience in the work environment related to the taught course of study (Annex No. 7, CV EUROPASS Curriculum Vitae).

The teaching staff involved in the BASP Law demonstrates robust academic credentials, research productivity, and practical engagement, ensuring the programme's alignment with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and contributing to its academic quality and relevance.

The BASP Law includes 72.2% of the faculty teaching staff members, of whom hold doctoral degrees—a strong indicator of academic excellence (Annex 6, Teaching Staff Data). Many teaching staff members balance their academic roles with significant practical legal experience, enriching the applied focus of the curriculum. For example, Criminal Procedure courses are delivered by experts with practical experience.

Between 2018 and 2023, the teaching staff collectively published 92 international scientific articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, underscoring their contributions to global legal scholarship (Annex 9, Publications of Academic Staff). Additionally, 115 publications were indexed in prominent databases such as Erih+ and Ebsco, and 136 national scientific publications were produced, further strengthening their role in advancing Latvian legal academia (Annex 9, Publications of Academic Staff).

Active participation in scholarly events is evident, with faculty attending 412 international conferences and 64 national conferences during this period (Annex 8, Scientific and Artistic Creation). This engagement aligns with the programme's objective to integrate contemporary legal developments into the curriculum while fostering international academic collaboration.

Key individual contributions, a constitutional law specialist, authored six Scopus-indexed articles and participated in 14 international conferences, aligning with the programme's focus on fostering a comprehensive understanding of public law (Annex 7, CVs of Academic Staff). As others, for example lecturer as expert in criminal law, published eight internationally indexed articles and co-investigated a European Union-funded research project on human rights in pre-trial detention (Annex 7, CVs of Academic Staff). Lecturer as an scholar in civil law, contributed five Scopus-indexed publications and presented at 12 international conferences, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the study programme (Annex 7, CVs of Academic Staff).

Practical expertise among the faculty is a notable strength. Twenty-three staff members possess over five years of direct legal practice in fields such as civil litigation, criminal investigation, and administrative governance. This ensures that students benefit from instruction informed by both

academic rigor and practical application (Annex 7, CVs of Academic Staff).

Areas for improvement include the need to increase international publication outputs, as approximately 28-30% of the staff primarily publish in national outlets, which limits their international visibility and the programme's global academic reputation (Annex 6, Teaching Staff Data). Additionally, not all teaching staff maintain active profiles in international databases such as Scopus or Web of Science, restricting the visibility and systematic tracking of their research contributions (Annex 6, Teaching Staff Data). Furthermore, while faculty research activity is considerable, its integration into teaching materials and student engagement opportunities could be enhanced, as students are not consistently exposed to faculty-led research projects, presenting an opportunity to strengthen the research-teaching nexus (SAR, p. 127).

Overall, the teaching staff's scholarly productivity, combined with their professional experience and active engagement in research and practical applications, supports the high quality and implementation of the BASP Law. By addressing areas such as increasing international publications, enhancing the integration of research into teaching, and improving global visibility through systematic tracking of academic contributions, the programme can further solidify its academic and practical impact while maintaining its local relevance.

2.4.5. There are clear mechanisms foreseen for ensuring mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, both on the level of the study programme as well as on the level of specific study courses. The heads of departments for each study course appoint a study course supervisor who ensures that in case several teaching staff is involved in implementing a course uniform teaching methods and requirements are being implemented. Clearly the heads of departments in this regard also act as supervisors of the course supervisors, whereby it is not clear where the responsibilities of the heads of departments start and end or overlap with the responsibilities of the study program director (see also chapter 1.1.3 of the Joint expert report), which might be particularly relevant for the study program at hand that engages a significant share of teaching staff that is not primarily employed as teaching staff, but outside of the UL FL. Practically this seems to be addressed on a daily basis in a well-functioning manner, but the assessment visit discussions indicated that there lies great responsibility on the part of the study program director, but no actual enforcement power. The assessment visit (at least based on the sample involved) did however generate the impression that the UL FL is a highly collegial institution and that fruitful cooperation is the rule, whereby in exceptional circumstances where issues might arise the relevant lead-staff acts coordinated and affirmative to induce necessary corrections.

The current student-staff ratio (16) is both optimal and stable throughout the reporting period.

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

The teaching staff is overwhelmingly qualified with a high share of teaching staff elected to highest academic positions at the UL FL. The teaching staff's profiles (Annex 7) show that these are leading experts in all subfields of law and its practice which is of particular importance for the study programmes' goal, its tasks and results. The qualifications of the teaching staff are fully compliant with the relevant provisions, whereby the only reservation in this regard relates to the discrepancies about the teaching staff provided across different annexes and data (see introduction to chapter 1.4.). There have clearly been certain changes to the composition of the teaching staff which follows from the documentation made available, whereby only 38 of the UN FL teaching staff is listed in the

english language study course descriptions and 66 in the national language course descriptions. Although the discrepancies are significant, their impact on the overall assessment of the teaching staff is moderate, since clearly the teaching staff represents Latvia's leading law experts and professionals in (mainly the highest) elected academic positions. The responsibilities of lead-staff (head of departments, program director, course supervisor) tasked with ensuring cooperation between the teaching staff are clearly defined, but seem to be overlapping in certain aspects. This is not necessarily a weakness but could even be a strength, but it quite likely might be duplicating workflows and administrative tasks, which would otherwise fall within one competence.

Strengths:

- 1) Highly qualified teaching staff with strong professional experience and competences necessary for successfully implementing the study programmes' goal, tasks and results.
- 2) High appeal of the study programme due to the heavy involvement of leading legal experts and practitioners holding top-positions in judiciary and advocacy and government.

Weaknesses:

none

## Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The assessment is based on the analysis as provided for criteria 2.4.1.-2.4.5. and based on the data available in the relevant annexes as cited in 2.4.1.-2.4.5., while thus relying on the findings of the assessment visit as well as open source data (practical experience of staff in case this was not included in the relevant annexes).

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "17\_1\_Compliance\_of\_BSP\_Law\_with\_standard.docx" affirms that BASP Law complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 13.05.2014 Regulation No. 240 "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided course descriptions in Annex "22 1 Descriptions study courses BSP Law 2024.docx" are available in both Latvian and English languages, although the programme is implemented only in Latvian.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The diploma example available in Annex " 15\_1\_DIPLOMA\_BSP\_LAW.zip" is compliant with the Cabinet of Ministers 16.04.2013 Regulation No. 202 "Procedures by which documents certifying higher education recognised by the State shall be issued".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached Annex "24.04.2024 - 20-13\_43 - Declaration - requirements in Section 55. 3 of on.edoc" (Head of study field Declaration) No. 20-13/43 affirms that the programme complies with the regulations of the Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

The Law on Higher Education Institutions states that not less than five professors and associate professors altogether who are elected in the UL shall take part in the implementation of the compulsory part and the limited elective part of academic study programme. According to the provided Annex "6 Teaching staff 2024.xlsx", a total of 12 professors and 10 associate professors who are elected in the UL take part in the implementation of the study field "Law".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "24.04.2024 - 20-13\_46 - Declaration - Latvian language of the academic.edoc.pdf" affirms that the knowledge of Latvian language of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 08.03.2022 Regulation No. 157 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "Examples of agreement.zip" containing study agreements fully complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 23.01.2007 Regulation No. 70 "Rules to be included in the study agreement".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided information in Annex "DECLARATION.ZIP" (Agreement between UL and Riga Stradiņš University (RSU)) affirms that students are provided with opportunities to continue their education in the RSU in the academic bachelor's study programme Law (43380) of the study field Law, if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "Refund and Compensation Policy\_EN.docx" states that the UL shall guarantee compensation for students if study programme is not accredited due to the action (activity or failure to act) of the UL or the licence of the study programme is revoked and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

BASP Law meets all the formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions, and Cabinet of Ministers regulations, issued in accordance with the law.

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

BASP Law meets all the formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Cabinet of Ministers "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education". The study courses form a unified whole and help to achieve the determined study results of the study programme. The arrangement of study courses in the curriculum is logical and sequential. Study methods contribute to the results of the study courses and the achievement of the goal set by the study programme. Study programme implementation is possible in all declared implementation options - full time studies, part time studies and part time extramural studies in Latvian.

Strengths:

- 1) The BASP Law prepares the substantial basis for successfully passing the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer.
- 2) Highly qualified teaching staff with strong professional experience and competences necessary for successfully implementing the study programmes' goal, tasks and results.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Lack of comprehensive mechanisms to track and mitigate high drop-out rates and thus first-year attrition more proactively.
- 2) Insufficient integration of essential soft skills, such as public speaking and negotiation, in the curriculum.

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

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Law"**

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

- 1) Include in the BASP Law the optional study course on internship, so that those who do not continue their studies in the professional master's study programme can also learn some practical skills.
- 2) Enhance the curriculum by integrating interdisciplinary and soft skills essential for lawyers, such as public speaking, negotiation, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence.

## Long-term recommendations

- 1) Establish comprehensive mechanism to monitor academic and non-academic factors contributing to high drop-out rates.
- 2) Implement targeted intervention, such as enhanced academic advising, mentoring programme, and structured onboarding sessions for new students, to improve retention.

## II - "Law and Governance of Institutions" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Law and Governance of Institutions" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

2.1.1. The Academic Master (Second-cycle) Study Programme "Law and Governance of Institutions" 45380 (MASP Law and Governance of Institutions) is well-aligned with the study field "Law" (study field) as evidenced by its curriculum, structure, and learning outcomes. The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions integrates key legal principles with institutional governance concepts, addressing the growing demand for interdisciplinary expertise in the labour market. It builds on foundational legal studies by delving into specialised topics such as corporate governance law, administrative law, and contract law, alongside governance-focused courses like public procurement management and human resource management (SAR, p. 182 - 185).

The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions reflects the goals and principles outlined in the academic education state standard, ensuring that the legal knowledge imparted is deepened and applied to real-world institutional challenges. Furthermore, the inclusion of research components reinforces the academic rigour of the programme, preparing graduates for both professional practice and further studies at the doctoral level.

2.1.2. The programme title: "Law and Governance of Institutions," reflects its interdisciplinary focus and alignment with the study field of "Law". The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions, code (45380), correctly denotes its classification as an academic Master's degree in the thematic area of legal education. The degree awarded - Master's in Law - is consistent with the advanced level of knowledge, skills, and competencies imparted through the curriculum (SAR, p. 183 - 184). Since the leading discipline in the interdisciplinary study programme is law, the title of the degree is consistent with the regulation.

As demonstrated in the SAR (p. 183 -184), the aims and objectives of the programme are clearly defined and interconnected with the learning outcomes. The primary aim is to provide students with in-depth knowledge of legal principles and their application in institutional governance. Objectives such as promoting students' competitiveness in the labour market, fostering critical thinking, and encouraging continuous professional development directly contribute to achieving this aim.

Admission requirements ensure accessibility for a diverse group of applicants. Entry requirements for the program are as follows:

- 1) Bachelor's degree or first-cycle professional higher education with a duration of at least 4 years or
- 2) Bachelor's degree or first-cycle professional higher education, obtained in 3 year studies, and second-cycle higher education.

Since the duration of bachelor's and master's studies in total must not be less than 5 years and duration of MASP Law and Governance are 1,5 years, these admission rules are compliant with the legislation.

The inclusion of an entrance examination from 2025 will strengthen the alignment of applicants' prior knowledge and experience with programme requirements, enhancing overall student preparedness. The part-time intramural study format is particularly well-suited for working professionals, ensuring flexibility while maintaining academic rigour (SAR, p. 181 -183).

As demonstrated in the SAR (p. 182), the duration of the programme, set at 1 year and 5 months for part-time studies, is adequate to achieve the stated aims and objectives. The implementation language and scheduling, designed to accommodate employed students, further enhance the accessibility and practicality of the programme.

2.1.3. The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions has undergone targeted adjustments to ensure compliance with national and European standards, including the transition to the ECTS. As demonstrated in the SAR (p. 182), the conversion of credit points to align with the ECTS involved a thorough review of course content and scope, maintaining the integrity of the programme while adhering to legal requirements.

One significant change was the adjustment of the course "Contract Law and Property Law" to five credit points, ensuring a balanced distribution of credits within the programme (SAR, p. 182). This modification reflects a strategic effort to maintain compliance with the total credit requirements without compromising the quality or depth of the courses offered.

From 2025, the introduction of an entrance examination represents a proactive effort to enhance the alignment of student preparedness with programme demands. This change is expected to strengthen the quality of the intake cohort and support better learning outcomes. While this initiative is a positive step forward, earlier implementation of the entrance examination could have addressed existing variability in student preparedness and improved alignment earlier. This would have enhanced student readiness to tackle the academic rigor of the programme and supported better retention and graduation outcomes.

No changes have been made to the programme's core parameters, such as its interdisciplinary focus or structural design (SAR, p. 182). The adjustments implemented reflect thoughtful considerations of stakeholder feedback and evolving educational standards, ensuring that the programme remains relevant and sustainable.

2.1.4. The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions is economically and socially justified by its alignment with national labour market trends and policy priorities. As highlighted in the Ministry of Economy's medium- and long-term labour market projections, demand for high-skilled professionals in governance and public administration is growing, driven by the increasing complexity of institutional management and legal frameworks.

Graduates of the programme are highly employable, with alumni surveys indicating strong alignment between their education and professional roles. According to the SAR (p. 184), in 2020 and 2021, 77% of graduates rated the programme as highly relevant to the labour market. Employment statistics further support this, with approximately 82% of graduates securing employment in roles directly related to their field of study within six months of graduation, reflecting the programme's success in preparing students for leadership roles in both public and private

sectors.

The SAR (p. 184) also shows relatively stable student enrollment trends, with an average of 33 students per year over the past five years. However, the number of new applications dropped in 2022, attributed partly to the COVID-19 pandemic and broader economic uncertainties. For instance, enrollment decreased from 37 students in 2020 to 29 in 2022. The planned introduction of an entrance examination and targeted recruitment efforts are anticipated to stabilise and potentially increase enrollment in the coming years.

Despite its strengths, the drop-out rate remains a concern. According to the SAR (p. 185), an average of 20% of students fail to complete the programme, primarily due to challenges associated with writing and defending their master's theses. Enhanced academic support, such as additional resources for thesis preparation and structured mentoring, could help address this issue and improve graduation rates.

Overall, the programme's relevance to the labour market, combined with its adaptability to socio-economic changes and efforts to address current challenges, underscores its long-term sustainability.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions demonstrates a strong alignment with the field of law, effectively combining theoretical and practical knowledge to address the demands of both the national and international labour markets. The programme's structure, including its aims, objectives, and learning outcomes, reflects a well-defined and coherent framework. The transition to the ECTS crediting and the adaptation of credit points to ensure compliance with national and European standards are significant strengths, showcasing the programme's responsiveness to regulatory and academic requirements. Furthermore, the part-time intramural format caters effectively to working professionals, aligning with the socio-economic trends and labour market needs.

However, challenges remain, such as dropout rates linked to the completion of master's theses and enrollment variability influenced by external factors. Addressing these issues through enhanced academic support, proactive recruitment strategies, and the timely introduction of entrance examinations will further strengthen the programme.

Strengths:

- 1) The programme demonstrates strong alignment with the study field of law, integrating advanced legal principles with governance skills to meet labour market demands;
- 2) Flexible part-time intramural format caters to working professionals, enhancing accessibility while maintaining academic rigour;
- 3) Strong social and economic justification, with high employability and positive feedback from graduates, highlights the programme's relevance to the labour market.

Weaknesses:

1) Dropout rates, particularly due to challenges in completing master's theses, indicate the need for enhanced academic support and mentoring.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The study courses included in the MASP Law and Governance of Institutions are very relevant for managers of organizations and meet the needs of the industry and the labour market. The content of the study courses is updated according to the development trends of the industry, the labour market and science and is ensured by the practical and scientific work experience of the teaching staff involved in teaching the program in the respective fields. The content of study courses is updated by the teaching staff of the respective study courses, taking into account developments and changes in the relevant field, if any, since the development of the course description (SAR, p. 185).

The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions differs from other programmes in the law field because it also includes a management aspect. The programme is interdisciplinary. It includes both law science study courses (Basic notions of the Latvian legal system, Contractual rights and property rights, State institutional system and administrative procedure e.t.c.) and management science study courses Corporate Management Law, Legal aspects of staff management, Personal data and business secret management, Public procurement management e.t.c. (Annex 21.3 Curriculum of the Academic master's study programme "Law and governance of institutions").

The programme is intended both for graduates of the Bachelor of Law program who do not want to continue their studies in the Professional Master of Law study programme, as well as for graduates of any other master programme who want to supplement their knowledge in the field of law.

The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions meets the formal requirements on state education standard, set forth in the Cabinet of Ministers 13.05.2014 Regulation No. 240 "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education". The comparison of programme indicators with the requirements specified in the Standard has been carried out in the Annex 17.3 "Compliance of the academic master's study programme "Law and Governance of Institutions" with the State Education Standard". Since the programme is academic, there is no need to compare it to any professional standard or professional qualification requirements.

The content of the MASP Law and Governance of Institutions is topical, the content of the study courses is interconnected and complementary, corresponds to the objectives of the programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes, as well as meets the needs of the industry, labour market and scientific trends.

The compulsory elective study courses have been developed taking into account the most recent developments in law in areas of major importance for the public and private sectors, such as personal data protection, public procurement, competition and intellectual property (SAR, p. 186).

The study courses included in the study programme are very relevant for managers of organizations

and meet the needs of the industry and the labor market. Managers employed in both the public and private sectors have up-to-date competencies in public procurement management, personnel management, competition law, as well as in-depth knowledge of such universal issues as contract law and property rights, as well as the state's institutional system and administrative process. The content of the study courses is updated according to the development trends of the industry, the labor market and science and is ensured by the practical and scientific work experience of the teaching staff involved in teaching the program in the respective fields. The content of study courses is updated by the teaching staff of the respective study courses, taking into account developments and changes in the relevant field, if any, since the development of the course description (SAR, p. 186).

The aim of the study programme is to provide a set of knowledge, skills and competence in law necessary for the management of organisations in accordance with level 7 of the Latvian Education Qualification Framework, deepening the understanding of the managers of various organisations regarding legal regularities and their importance in achieving the strategic goals of organisations. To achieve this aim, nine components of knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired as a result of the study programme have been formulated. The topics of the courses were formulated taking into account the planned learning outcomes, and the scope of knowledge, skills and competences to be achieved in each course (SAR, p. 186).

The academic programme should include courses of study that help to learn research and methodology. The study course Practical aspects of legal documents production is included in the programme, but it is still not enough for the acquisition of research skills.

Students in this academic master's study programme do not have the opportunity to learn research methodology either from the process of writing study papers (as in the bachelor study programme) nor from the process of writing and defending an internship report (as in the professional study programme). Therefore, an additional study course teaching research methodology would be highly recommended.

2.2.2. Almost all of the courses included in the MASP Law and Governance of Institutions cover concepts and issues in law. The lecturers involved in the implementation of the study programme are qualified as lawyers and most of them have a PhD in law; they have considerable teaching, scientific and practical experience in law (SAR, p. 188).

The final examination - the defence of the master's thesis - requires the student, for example, to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the methods of scientific research applicable in law and to strengthen the skills of their application, the ability to identify legal problems and to provide reasoned solutions to them. The awarding of a master's degree is based on the achievements and findings of the law field of science.

2.2.3. As demonstrated in the SAR, various methods for the acquisition and consolidation of knowledge are used in the study process - introductory lectures, interactive lectures, summative consolidation lectures, and problem-oriented lectures. Practitioners and professionals from different institutions are invited to deliver individual lectures in study courses in order to promote the coherence of theory and practice. The study process is supported by methods that facilitate students' communication in the implementation of study tasks, solving real issues pertaining to the field, and modelling situations.

The e-learning environment is used in the study process and to promote independent studies. Each

study course has an e-learning environment (Moodle) where students have access to lesson materials, task descriptions in addition to course-related learning materials, as well as study tasks (tests, forums, seminars, conferences, etc.) (SAR, p. 189).

The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions includes the study courses Master thesis I and Master thesis II, and it is indicated that it is implemented by all teaching staff who supervise undergraduate work. As part of this study course, the student consults with the supervisor of the master's thesis, as well as listens to an introductory lecture on writing the master's thesis. However, there is no planned preliminary evaluation of the master's thesis at the faculty level, before the defense of the thesis in the State commission.

The student-centred approach is observed in updating the study programme and the respective study courses, paying special attention to meaningful formulation of learning outcomes, thus promoting the dialogue between teaching staff and students on the content of studies, forms and methods of organization.

2.2.4. Not applicable

2.2.5. Not applicable

2.2.6. The final topics are mostly chosen by students in the context of their previous work experience and responsibilities. Selecting topics in this way ensures that the student already has a sufficient understanding of the issues in the field to be able to carry out scientific research in law.

Although the programme is interdisciplinary, law problems are analyzed in all Master's theses. The topics of the master's theses are topical in law and management sciences, they fully correspond to the field of law, while also analyzing management problems. For example "EU competition law framework and standard of proof in collusion cases involving pricing algorithm software", "Legal framework and practice of granting and compensating leave", "Problems of compliance with the Labor Law in educational institutions established by municipalities" e.t.c.(SAR, 191).

The Master's theses are mostly of high quality and demonstrate the master's degree holder's ability to solve legal problems at the micro level (within a specific organisation), providing solutions for the improvement of various legal processes, and at the macro level, identifying legal problems in the application of law, generalising practice insights, etc. (SAR, 191). Students are choosing to study topical and sufficiently complex problems. In the Civil Law sub-field, students most often choose to study topics related to the governance of capital companies and personnel management. In the State Law sub-field focus on issues of societal relevance and topicality in Law studies.

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

The content of the MASP Law and Governance of Institutions, the content of the study courses fully achieves the programme's aim and outcomes, and that the programme is oriented to the needs of the labour market and scientific trends in the science branch "Law". The study courses included in the study programme are very relevant for managers of organizations and meet the needs of the industry and the labour market.

The final topics are mostly chosen by students in the context of their previous work experience and responsibilities. Selecting topics in this way ensures that the student already has a sufficient understanding of the issues in the field to be able to carry out scientific research in law.

Study courses form an integral whole and help to achieve the determined study results of the study programme. The layout of the study courses in the curriculum is logical and consecutive. Study methods contribute to achieving the results of the study courses and the set aim of the study programme.

The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions meets the formal requirements on state education standard, set forth in the Cabinet of Ministers 13.05.2014 Regulation No. 240 "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education". The comparison of programme indicators with the requirements specified in the Standard has been carried out in the Annex 17.3 "Compliance of the academic master's study programme "Law and Governance of Institutions" with the State Education Standard". The content of the MASP Law and Governance of Institutions and the content of study courses correspond to the purpose and results of the programme, which is oriented to the needs of the labour market and scientific trends in the science field "Law". However, the program does not include study courses that teach research methodology. Perhaps research methods are taught in the process of developing a master's thesis.

The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions differs from other programmes in the field "Law" because it also includes a management aspect. The programme is interdisciplinary. It includes both law science study courses (Basic notions of the Latvian legal system, Contractual rights and property rights, State institutional system and administrative procedure e.t.c.) and management science study courses Corporate Management Law, Legal aspects of staff management, Personal data and business secret management, Public procurement management e.t.c. (Annex 21.3 Curriculum of the Academic master's study programme "Law and governance of institutions").

The programme is intended both for graduates of the bachelor of law programme who do not want to continue their studies in the professional master of law study programme, as well as for graduates of any other bachelor programme who want to supplement their knowledge in the field of law.

Strengths:

1) The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions provides an opportunity to acquire in-depth knowledge in the field of law for persons who are managers or who need it to perform their duties in the management of state or local government institutions.

2) The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions provides an opportunity of master studies for graduates of the bachelor of law programmes who do not want to continue their studies in the professional master of law study programme, as well as for graduates of any other bachelor programmes who want to supplement their knowledge in the field of law.

Weaknesses:

1) Although this is an academic programme where the emphasis should be put on research, MASP Law and Governance of Institutions does not include any study course on research methodology.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions is based on the achievements and findings of the Law field of science.

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

#### **Analysis**

2.3.1. This special academic master caters for the needs of management staff, trying to get additional insight in specific legal fundamentals and principles which they want to add to their already acquired knowledge and experiences in other fields.

There are no additional resources required for the study programme to be able to conduct studies and research. Library resources and databases available have been described in detail in the SAR (p. 53-60), criteria 2.31 to 2.3.3. All necessary prerequisites for the successful implementation of the study program are met and upheld by constantly supplementing literature and databases around emerging new and topical research fields or curricular modifications.

Teaching staff is free to suggest the replenishing of academic literature in volume or in new titles. On a yearly basis, an updating of library resources is undertaken. Library staff is offering regular introductions of how to avail of and use the resources and how to research in databases. Publicly available court rulings are at disposal. Administration institutions can provide data and information on specific topics if needed for research purposes.

2.3.2. Not applicable

2.3.3. The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions is run on students' tuition fees only. The UL cost calculation methodology is based on a percentage breakdown of costs according to cost factors like teaching and other staff costs, infrastructure costs, property and services and other cost factors.

Based on this cost pattern, fee-paying students must be at least 75 to reach break-even (SAR, p. 193). As the rise in general cost for energy, services and the rise in inflation have considerably raised the cost factors, tuition fees had to be raised comparably from the autumn semester 2024 on to create a situation where the study programme's revenues cover its expenses. With this measure taken, the study programme is financially sound.

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

The discussions with students and graduates from the MASP Law and Governance of Institutions have expressed great satisfaction with the programme. According to the opinions of these main stakeholder groups, the programme offers valuable insight and a well recognized qualification in the main legal fields. No shortcomings of any kind have been uttered.

When it comes to the tuition fees having been raised, the dean of the FL has upon request explained

how the specific rises are transparently calculated with the expertise of the Finance Department of the FL consulting the Student Council during the process before coming to a decision.

To the satisfaction of the panel, MASP Law and Governance of Institutions is run smoothly and effectively and is financially sound.

Strengths:

1) MASP Law and Governance of Institutions is catering for students already having management positions who want to complete their expertise with certain legal aspects. In that respect, the programme offers a unique opportunity to complete one's education with relevant legal aspects.

2) The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions is highly commended by the partaking students. The provision of the programme meets professional needs of already working students and is therefore recommended.

3) The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions altogether offers new and wider career opportunities. With the help of the programme extended education offers wider career opportunities when returning to the labour market.

Weaknesses:

none

## **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Assessment is based on analysis of SAR materials, p. 50 ff., 192 ff. and discussions at assessment visit.

The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions offers to further one's education concerning legal aspects and thus widening career opportunities.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. The UL FL teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with requirements and regulatory enactments, as is explained in full detail in the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.) and documented throughout the relevant annexes (for discrepancies in the provided data and documentation please see chapter 1.4.). Table 5.4.2.1. in the SAR shows that the majority of the teaching staff consistently throughout the 5-year reporting period holds the highest academic positions (professor and associate professor), which due to the strict election procedure at the UL and the highly competitive election criteria ensures a high standard of the implementation of the study process. There is also a high share of involvement of associate professors in the study programme implementation, as well as slightly lower share of lectures and other teaching staff. There is a consistent share of teaching staff with a doctoral degree, whereby this group makes up

the majority of the teaching staff. 17 teaching staff are involved in teaching the study programme, including 3 professors, 3 associate professors, 4 assistant professors, 2 lecturers and 5 teachers.

It needs to be stressed that there is generally a high positive assessment of the teaching staff's qualifications and competences, which are also strongly valued by students (based on the feedback received during the assessment visit, as well as systematically collected through student surveys), especially with regards to their leading positions in the most prominent judicial, police and governmental institutions of Latvia. There have however been repeated negative evaluations expressed in the student survey about the lack of pedagogical skills of some lecturers. Hence changes have been made in the lecturers of the relevant 2 study courses.

2.4.2. According to the SAR there have been some changes in the composition of the teaching staff in several study courses. The slight changes in teaching staff composition according to the SAR (chapter 3.4.2.) have had no significant impact on the quality of the study programme. This finding has also been confirmed during the assessment visit, especially through the discussions with all the relevant stakeholders.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. Almost all of the courses included in the programme cover concepts and issues in law. The lecturers involved in the implementation of the study programme are qualified as lawyers and most of them have a PhD in Law; they have considerable teaching, scientific and practical experience in law.

The lecturers involved in the MASP Law and Governance of Institutions have a rich volume of publications (Annex: 9 publications Study field Law 2024.docx). Almost all lecturers have international publications indexed in databases Scopus and/or Web of Science. Those few lecturers who do not have publications or have only national publications have more than five years of work experience in the work environment related to the taught course of study (Annex No. 7, CV EUROPASS Curriculum Vitae).

The information provided in the UL annexes is sufficient to demonstrate that the teaching staff has published in peer-reviewed publications, including international editions, or possesses adequate practical experience in the field over the past six years. However, to enhance clarity and comprehensiveness from UL's perspective, further details regarding improvements in the annexes and the provided information are outlined in section 1.4 of the expert report.

2.4.5. There are clear mechanisms foreseen for ensuring mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, both on the level of the study programme as well as on the level of specific study courses. Each study course has a responsible teaching staff member who ensures that the organisational requirements (timetables, e-learning materials, grades) are met. The main mechanism for promoting cooperation and ensuring the interconnection of courses within the study programme is the study direction council meetings, which are held approximately twice per semester, where the aspects to be improved in the study plans and course sequence are discussed.

The current student-staff ratio (3,6) is both optimal and stable throughout the reporting period as of the academic year 2020/2021.

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

The teaching staff is overwhelmingly qualified with a high share of teaching staff elected to highest academic positions at the UL FL. The teaching staff's profiles (Annex 7) show that these are leading experts in all subfields of law and its practice which is of particular importance for the study programmes' goal, its tasks and results. The qualifications of the teaching staff are fully compliant with the relevant provisions, whereby the only reservation in this regard relates to the discrepancies about the teaching staff provided across different annexes and data (see introduction to chapter 1.4.). There have been certain changes to the composition of the teaching staff, but there is no indication that this might have negatively affected the quality of the study programme. The teaching staff represents Latvia's leading law experts and professionals in (mainly the highest) elected academic positions. There are clear mechanisms foreseen for ensuring mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, both on the level of the study programme as well as on the level of specific study courses.

Strengths:

- 1) Highly qualified teaching staff with strong professional experience and competences necessary for successfully implementing the study programmes' goal, tasks and results.
- 2) High appeal of the study programme due to the heavy involvement of leading legal experts and practitioners holding top-positions in judiciary and advocacy and government.

Weaknesses:  
none

## Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The assessment is based on the analysis as provided for criteria 2.4.1.-2.4.5. and based on the data provided in the annexes as cited in section 2.4.1.-2.4.5., while also relying on the findings of the assessment visit and open source data (e.g. practical experience of teaching staff members for whom this information was not submitted in the relevant annexes).

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "17 3 Compliance-State Education Standard MSP Law Governance Instit.docx" affirms that the programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 13.05.2014 Regulation No.

240 "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided course descriptions in Annex " 22 3 Descriptions study courses MSP Law Govern Instit 2024.docx" are available in both Latvian and English languages, although the programme is implemented only in Latvian. Some weaknesses have been identified in the previous chapters of this report; however this does not change the compliance to the normatives.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The diploma example available in Annex "15\_3\_DIPLOMA\_MSP\_Law and Governance of Institutions.zip" is compliant with the Cabinet of Ministers 16.04.2013 Regulation No. 202 "Procedures by which documents certifying higher education recognised by the State shall be issued".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached Annex "24.04.2024 - 20-13\_43 - Declaration - requirements in Section 55. 3 of on.edoc" (Head of study field Declaration) from 24.04.2024, No. 20-13/43 affirms that the programme complies with the regulations of the Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

The Law on Higher Education Institutions states that not less than five professors and associate professors altogether who are elected in the UL shall take part in the implementation of the compulsory part and the limited elective part of academic study programme. According to the provided Annex "6 Teaching staff 2024.xlsx", a total of 12 professors and 10 associate professors who are elected in the UL takes part in the implementation of the study field "Law".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "24.04.2024 - 20-13\_46 - Declaration - Latvian language of the academic.edoc.pdf" affirms that the knowledge of Latvian language of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 08.03.2022 Regulation No. 157 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "Examples of agreement.zip" containing study agreements fully complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 23.01.2007 Regulation No. 70 "Rules to be included in the study agreement".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided information in Annex "DECLARATION.ZIP" (Agreement between UL and Riga Stradiņš University (RSU)) affirms that students are provided with opportunities to continue their education in the RSU in the professional master study programme "Law" (47380) of the study field Law, if the implementation of the study programme is terminated (considering the admission rules).

According to the Riga Stradins University (RSU) admission rules (Regulations of Admission to the second cycle (master's) study programs of RSU for the 2024/2025 academic year), in order to start studying Law in the Professional Master's study program "Law", the applicant needs a Bachelor's degree in the "Law" study programme.

Provided information in Annex "DECLARATION.ZIP" (Agreement between UL and Turība University (TU)) affirms that students are provided with opportunities to continue their education in the TU in the academic master study programme "Law in Management of Organizations"

(45380) of the study field Law, if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

According to the Turiba University admission rules (Turiba University Enrollment Regulations for academic year 2024/2025, to start studies in the study program "Law in management of organizations" (120 CP studies) it is required: 1) academic bachelor's degree in law science; or 2) academic or professional bachelor's degree or second-level professional higher education (level 5 professional qualification) in the field of commercial studies and administration, provided that prior knowledge in the area of law is obtained to the amount of at least 15 CP and at least one year of professional experience in work related to the field of law; or 3) academic or professional bachelor's degree or second-level professional higher education in other fields of education, provided that prior knowledge in the field of law, commercial studies and administration has been acquired to the amount of at least 15 CP in each of the fields and at least two years of professional experience in work related to the field of law.

If the required amount of credit points has not been obtained and there is no professional experience, the person has to take entrance exams to check the level of knowledge of the basics of law.

This means that students who have a bachelor's degree in "Law" will be able to continue their studies at both Riga Stradins University and Turiba University as they choose. The rest will have the opportunity to continue their studies only in Turiba University.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "Refund and Compensation Policy\_EN.docx" states that the UL shall guarantee compensation for students if study programme is not accredited due to the action (activity or failure to act) of the UL or the licence of the study programme is revoked and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

### **Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

MASP Law and Governance of Institutions meets all the formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions, and Cabinet of Ministers regulations, issued in accordance with the law.

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

MASP Law and Governance of Institutions meets all the formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Cabinet of Ministers "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education". Study programme implementation is possible in part time studies in Latvian. The programme is intended for entrepreneurs who want to acquire additional knowledge and skills in law. Therefore, the programme does not have such high requirements for compliance with any of the legal professions.

Strengths:

- 1) The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions provides an opportunity to acquire in-depth knowledge in the field of law for persons who are managers or who need it to perform their duties in the management of state or local government institutions.
- 2) The MASP Law and Governance of Institutions provides an opportunity of master studies for graduates of the bachelor of law programmes who do not want to continue their studies in the professional master of law study programme, as well as for graduates of any other bachelor programmes who want to supplement their knowledge in the field of law.
- 3) Flexible part-time intramural format caters to working professionals, enhancing accessibility while maintaining academic rigour.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Although this is an academic programme where the emphasis is put on research, the programme does not include any study course on research methodology.
- 2) Dropout rates, particularly due to challenges in completing master's theses, indicate the need for enhanced academic support and mentoring.

## **Evaluation of the study programme "Law and Governance of Institutions"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Law and Governance of Institutions"**

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

- |  |
|--|
| 1) Include the study course "Research Methodology" in the programme so that students can more successfully learn the methodology of writing a master's thesis. |
| 2) Establish comprehensive mechanism to monitor academic and non-academic factors contributing to high drop-out rates.   |

#### **Long-term recommendations**

## II - "Pre-trial Investigation" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Pre-trial Investigation" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

2.1.1. As described in the SAR (p. 237) the Professional Master (Second-cycle) Study Programme "Pre-trial investigation" 47380 (PMASP Pre-trial investigation) demonstrates alignment with the study field "Law" (study field) by integrating a comprehensive curriculum that addresses theoretical and practical aspects of legal science. The PMASP Pre-trial investigation structure is based on the Lawyer's Occupational Standard (April 8, 2020, protocol Nr. 3), which emphasizes core competencies, including advanced criminal law, procedural law, and interdisciplinary topics relevant to pre-trial investigations. By offering advanced modules in criminal justice and providing professional internships tailored to the needs of investigating authorities, the study programme ensures compliance with the study field's requirements.

Furthermore, the PMASP Pre-trial investigation aligns with national and European directives, including the Cabinet of Ministers' Order No. 83 ("Par pasākumiem iekšējās drošības un tiesībsargājošo iestāžu izglītības uzlabošanai") and EU recommendations for enhancing law enforcement education. This alignment reflects a commitment to addressing national security challenges while adhering to international legal standards. The inclusion of a Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer underscores the PMASP Pre-trial investigation relevance to the legal profession.

2.1.2. The programme title, "Professional Master's in Pre-trial Investigation," accurately reflects its specialization and aligns with its objectives to train legal professionals equipped for roles in pre-trial investigations. The programme's code, 47380, corresponds to the second cycle of professional education under the thematic area of "Law" (SAR, p. 237). The degree awarded—"Professional Master's Degree in Law"—and the professional qualification of "Lawyer" are consistent with the programme's stated objectives and learning outcomes.

The learning outcomes are explicitly defined to equip students with analytical, ethical, and professional skills critical for investigative work. Objectives such as fostering advanced knowledge of criminal law, critical thinking, and the ability to address complex legal problems ensure that the programme meets its educational and professional goals. Admission requirements, including prior legal education and an entrance examination, align with the programme's complexity, ensuring that only qualified candidates enter.

The duration of the programme is reasonable, with full-time studies spanning two years and part-time studies extending to two years and five months. This time frame allows for the delivery of 120 ECTS credits, balancing theoretical knowledge, practical applications, and research activities (SAR, p. 240). While the primary implementation language is Latvian, the programme could benefit from including English or other language options to enhance its appeal to a broader audience and development of international competencies.

Admission requirements to PMASP Pre-trial investigation: First cycle (second level) professional higher education qualification in law or a Bachelor's degree in law, provided that at least 120 credits of law courses have been completed in academic programmes. Additional condition - employment

with the Investigating Authority or Prosecutor's office. The candidates are matriculated pursuant to the conditions of the ISA consortium and in accordance with the list compiled by the Ministry of the Interior, taking into account the selection requirements and evaluation criteria established by the investigating authorities (SAR, pp. 234.-235).

Graduating from the MASP in Pre-Trial Investigation provides opportunities to work at various stages and in different capacities. Students who graduate from the BASP in Pre-Trial Investigation can work as investigators in criminal law. After completing the MASP in Pre-Trial Investigation and passing the Uniform State Professional Qualification in Law, they will become fully qualified lawyers.

By completing both study programmes, students can operate on a broader scale, serving in roles as both investigators and lawyers within the judicial system.

2.1.3. Since its licensing in August 2023, as demonstrated in the SAR (p. 236) no significant changes have been implemented in the PMASP Pre-trial investigation. The transition to the ECTS was seamlessly integrated, with one credit point equating to 25 hours of study work, as per national regulations. Course credits were adjusted to whole numbers without altering their content, demonstrating foresight and alignment with legal and educational standards.

Planned measures, such as introducing promotional activities to enhance the visibility of the PMASP Pre-trial investigation among law enforcement professionals, reflect a proactive approach to addressing challenges. These adjustments are expected to improve enrolment and strengthen the programme's alignment with national needs.

2.1.4. As described in the SAR (p. 241-243) the PMASP Pre-trial investigation addresses a critical need for qualified professionals in pre-trial investigations, as highlighted by the National Security Concept and the Cabinet of Ministers' directives. Its economic and social relevance is evident from the collaboration with law enforcement agencies, guaranteeing employment for all graduates. Students are required to commit to at least five years of service within the respective institutions, ensuring a direct impact on national security and governance.

The small cohort sizes (15 and 20 students in the 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 academic years (SAR, p. 244), respectively) allow for focused instruction and tailored support. While the limited scope may constrain broader participation, it ensures that the PMASP Pre-trial investigation remains aligned with specific institutional needs and available resources.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The PMASP Pre-trial investigation demonstrates a robust alignment with national and institutional priorities, addressing a critical need for highly qualified professionals in criminal justice and law enforcement. The PMASP Pre-trial investigation integration within the ISA consortium ensures collaboration among key stakeholders, fostering a specialised educational environment that meets the demands of the labour market. The comprehensive curriculum, which includes theoretical knowledge, practical training, and a focus on criminal law, equips graduates with the skills and competencies required to excel in their professional roles.

The PMASP Pre-trial investigation strengths lie in its clear alignment with occupational standard,

guaranteed employment for graduates through contractual agreements, and a curriculum tailored to the specific needs of law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, the study programme benefits from state funding and institutional support, ensuring its sustainability and contribution to national security.

Overall, the PMASP Pre-trial investigation makes a significant contribution to the quality and professionalism of pre-trial investigations, with a strong potential for further development and adaptability to emerging trends and demands in the field.

Strengths:

- 1) Strong alignment with national legal and security frameworks, addressing critical workforce needs in law enforcement.
- 2) Comprehensive curriculum combining theoretical foundations and practical skills in criminal law.
- 3) Guaranteed employment for graduates, promoting career stability and direct application of skills.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Limited possibilities to develop international competences due to absence of English or other foreign language options within the programme.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The content of the PMASP Pre-trial investigation corresponds to the objectives of the programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes. The aim, objectives and learning outcomes of the programme are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and can be attained if the student develops the interest and motivation to study in order to obtain an education that corresponds to level 7 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework. The programme includes the necessary courses to provide students with a broad and in-depth knowledge of the law and its application in various fields, especially criminal law, as well as those that allow them to develop other skills essential for analysing and interpreting the law, improving expressive skills, the ability to structure and argue their views on professional issues, and developing logical and analytical thinking (SAR, p. 245).

The programme's study courses specify specific objectives – the actions to be taken to achieve the aim. Whereas the learning outcomes to be achieved in the programme, which are to be attained by completing the set objectives, are defined as the knowledge, skills and competences required in the field of law (SAR, p. 245).

The content of the PMASP Pre-trial investigation is designed to ensure its compliance with external normative acts, including the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the Law on Vocational Education, the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations on the State Standard of Vocational Education, the Occupational Standard "Lawyer", and the UL normative acts that determine the requirements for the content of study programmes.

PMASP Pre-trial investigation content complies with national regulations:

1) with state education standards - with the Cabinet of Ministers 13.06.2023 Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education" (Annex 17.5 "Compliance of the professional master's study programme "Pre-trial Investigation" with the State Education Standard");

2) with professional qualification requirements - with Lawyer's occupational standard, agreed at the Vocational Education and Employment Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council at its meeting of 8 April 2020, Minutes No. 3 (Annex 18.3 "Compliance of the professional master's study programme "Pre-trial Investigation" with the occupational standard").

The PMASP Pre-trial investigation is structured to include study courses specific to the field of law (Contemporary State Law, Modern national private law, Commercial Law, Cross-Border Co-operation in Civil Matters, Topical Issues of the Public International and European Union Law, as well as study courses of a general nature (Mediation, Dispute resolution mechanisms in private law, Problems of legal theory, philosophy, sociology and history of Latvian law) and courses providing for their advancement, which are necessary for the full performance of the professional duties of an investigator (National security, Business and Criminal Law e.t.c.) (Annex 21. 5 "Curriculum of the Professional master's study programme "PRE-TRIAL INVESTIGATION"). The acquisition of law study courses follows a sequential approach, with theoretical core courses in the field being included at the beginning of the PMASP Pre-trial investigation, followed by the acquisition of courses in various subfields of law.

Part A of The PMASP Pre-trial investigation includes study courses (Annex 21. 5 "Curriculum of the Professional master's study programme "PRE-TRIAL INVESTIGATION"):

- In the field of criminal law - 18 CP in total (International Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure, Advanced Criminal Law Course, Advanced criminal procedure);
- In the field of civil law - 21 CP in total (Modern national private law, Dispute resolution mechanisms in private law, Commercial Law, Cross-Border Co-operation in Civil Matters);
- In the field of international law - 3 CP in total (Topical Issues of the Public International and European Union Law);
- In the field of theory and history of law- 9 CP in total ( Problems of legal theory, philosophy, sociology and history of Latvian law);
- In the field of state law - 6 CP in total (Contemporary State Law).

The PMASP Pre-trial investigation covers the study of all sub-fields of law at an advanced level and the study of courses necessary for the performance of the lawyer's duties in the field of criminal law (advanced criminal law course, advanced criminal procedure course, Topical Issues of the Public International and European Union Law, Business and Criminal Law, Contemporary State Law, Dispute resolution mechanisms in private law, Personal data protection rights, etc.) at an expanded and in-depth level (SAR, p. 244).

The content of the study courses, internship and final examination included in the PMASP Pre-trial investigation prove that the programme can be recognised as a study programme specialising in criminal law, which at the same time provides an opportunity to acquire all the knowledge, skills and competences necessary for the legal profession at an appropriate level (SAR, p. 245).

Employers are actively involved in keeping the PMASP Pre-trial investigation up-to-date according to labour market trends and needs.

The curriculum of PMASP Pre-trial investigation includes study courses in all five areas in which the Lawyers unified exam must be taken: theory and history of law, criminal law, civil law, state law and

international law (Annex 21. 5 "Curriculum of the Professional master's study programme "PRE-TRIAL INVESTIGATION"). Based on what is indicated in the study course descriptions (Annex 22.5 "Descriptions of courses of the professional master's study programme "Pre-trial investigation"), it should be concluded that all five areas of the exam are taught at a sufficient level. Since the time for taking the exam in this program has not yet started, then it is difficult to judge the level of acquired knowledge.

2.2.2. The awarding of a Master degree is based on the achievements and findings of the law field of science. Successful completion of the study programme leads to a professional master's degree in law and a qualification of a Lawyer. The expected learning outcomes of the PMASP Pre-trial investigation, formalised in the award of the professional master's degree and the qualification of Lawyer, are clearly defined.

Representatives of the pre-trial investigation authorities were involved in defining them (SAR, p. 247).

The PMASP Pre-trial investigation is implemented in the study field of law with specialisation in criminal law. Students who successfully complete the programme will have a thorough understanding of criminal law and will be familiar with its developments.

The award of the degree and professional qualification is justified by the research and high-level professional activity of the academic staff involved (the majority of the academic staff involved in the programme hold doctorates in law and/or have long-standing high-level professional activity, and most of them are also active in research) and by undertaking a number of research projects as part of the study programme.

2.2.3. The study implementation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and whole PMASP Pre-trial investigation.

At the beginning of studies, students are informed of the organisation and implementation of studies in the relevant study programme, but when commencing the acquisition of each individual study course, the academic staff inform students specifically about the organisation, content, requirements, learning outcomes, examinations and evaluation criteria, as well as explain the integral quality of the study course for achieving the overall outcomes of the study programme (SAR, p. 248).

The master's thesis is planned to be elaborated on issues relevant to the professional activity of an investigator, while the final examination - the qualification examination of a lawyer is conducted in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 46 of 15 January 2019 "Procedure of the State Unified Professional Qualification Examination of a Lawyer". The evaluation of the Master's thesis is done by the State Examination Board, which includes representatives of the UL Law Faculty, representatives of the ISA consortium partners, as well as representatives of the Investigation and Prosecutor's Office as the supervisory body of the investigation institutions (SAR, p. 248).

The delivery mechanism of the study programme ensures the achievement of learning outcomes, incorporating the principles of student-centred education. Students receive support and feedback from the teaching staff during the study process. Assessment criteria for marking are made public in advance. Assessment gives students an opportunity to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the planned learning outcomes.

Student-centred methods dominate the learning process. The study process is supported by methods that facilitate students' communication in the implementation of study tasks, solving real issues pertaining to the field, modelling situations. Teaching staff mainly use methods that encourage students' active participation, critical thinking and reflection. The study process takes into account the diversity of students' learning needs in the choice of pedagogical methods, promoting students' learning motivation, self-reflection and participation in the study process (SAR, p. 250).

The learning outcomes as well as the requirements for successful completion of the course - mid-term and final examinations - are the same for all forms of study. In part-time study forms, part of the in-person contact hours are replaced by students' independent work. In order to structure the independent work of part-time students, lecturers use methods such as writing independent works or essays, posing questions which students have to answer independently by studying the literature, solving and submitting questions independently and later receiving comments from lecturers on the results of their independent work. (SAR, p. 251).

2.2.4. There is an internship planned during the study programme. The PMASP Pre-trial investigation provides for two types of plans (Annex 21. 5 "Curriculum of the Professional master's study program "Pre-Trial Investigation"):

- 1) Plan A with practice in the amount of 39 CP is intended for graduates of the academic bachelor's study programme, for whom no practice acquired in previous studies in the amount of 30 CP,
- 2) Plan B with practice in the amount of 9 CP is intended for graduates of professional bachelor or other professional study programs, learned practice in the amount of 30 CP in previous studies.

The internship complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments Internship in the amount of at least 39 credit points if it is intended for graduates of an academic bachelor's study programme, or at least six credit points if it is intended for graduates of a bachelor's programme is required (Annex 17.5 "Compliance of the professional master's study programme "Pre-trial Investigation" with the State Education Standard").

The opportunities and provision of internships are effective. The tasks of the internship are related to the learning outcomes achievable. The internship complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments - the content of the internship, the rules for the formatting and defence of the internship report are laid down in the Internship Regulations, the relevant internship course description and the internship programme. The internship is planned to be provided in various investigating authorities in Latvia, e.g., the State Police, the Prison Administration, the Internal Security Bureau, the State Border Guard, the NAF Military Police, the State Revenue Service, the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau, the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Latvia. Since the study programme is implemented within the framework of the ISA Consortium with the specific aim of training a certain number of specialists for work in investigating institutions, 100% of all students are provided with internships in an investigating institution (SAR, p. 251).

However, it should be noted that the internship is intended only in the field of criminal law (Annex 21. 5 "Curriculum of the Professional master's study program "Pre-Trial Investigation"). This may cause consequences that practical skills are obtained in criminal law but missing in other areas of law.

2.2.5. Not applicable

2.2.6. The first master thesis defences are scheduled in the academic year 2025/2026, so it is not

possible to perform their analysis.

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

The content of the PMASP Pre-trial investigation complies with the external regulatory requirements: regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education, requirements of the standard of the Lawyer's profession, procedures for the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer. PMASP Pre-trial investigation content complies with with state education standards on professional higher education and with Lawyer's occupational standard.

In-depth knowledge is taught in all five areas of law: civil law, criminal law, state law, international law, and legal theory and philosophy. "Lawyer's qualification exam" is included as a separate study course, which is implemented by all teaching staff involved in the PMASP Pre-trial investigation.

The content of the study courses, practice and final exam included in the PMASP Pre-trial investigation proves that the programme can be recognized as a criminal law specialization study programme, which at the same time provides an opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competences for obtaining the profession of Lawyer.

The content of the programme, the content of the study courses correspond to the purpose and results of the programme, and the programme is oriented to the needs of the labour market and scientific trends in the science field "Law".

The study courses form a unified whole and help to achieve the specified study results of the study programme. The arrangement of study courses in the curriculum is logical and sequential.

Study methods contribute to the results of study courses and the achievement of the goal set by the PMASP Pre-trial investigation.

Strengths:

1) Students are guaranteed job opportunities in law enforcement institutions for at least five years after graduating from the PMASP Pre-trial investigation.

2) Employers are actively involved in keeping the study programme up-to-date according to labour market trends and needs.

Weaknesses:

1) Since the PMASP Pre-trial investigation is recognized as a criminal law specialization study programme, and internship is provided only in the criminal law, it may cause consequences that practical skills are obtained in criminal law only, but missing in other areas of law.

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

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

### **Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The PMASP Pre-trial investigation is based on the achievements and findings of the field of Law science.

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

### **Analysis**

2.3.1. The PMASP Pre-trial investigation is run by a joint effort of the ISA consortium. The consortium is pooling its resources, allowing for the flexible input of specialized lecturers (e.g. being recruited for special topics from the Police College) and using literature and forensic tools from all three consortium partners.

Within the FL all resources of the FL are readily available (for details see SAR, chapter 2.3 'Resources and Provision of the Study Programme', p. 50 ff.). Starting off with the new study programme a short while ago students were enabled to study efficiently and independently. Constantly supplemented information resources, especially electronic databases which allow for up to date access to journals, articles, commentaries and rulings form a sufficient basis for study and research. The policy of constant review and updating of academic literature allows for a sufficient basis to achieve the aims of the PMASP Pre-trial investigation.

On top of the overall level of resourcing for implementing and upholding the programme, 'Pre-trial Investigation' there are special needs and necessities to run such a highly specialized programme. Specific technical capacities for the study of forensic sciences, conducting investigative experiments need to be provided. Forensic equipment and tools for study purposes and examinations are available through a sharing mechanism between the partners of the ISA consortium (see Art. 3.4.15 of the Founding Agreement of the ISA Consortium). Necessary investments in infrastructure and information and teaching resources are covered by the State budget upon decision making of the consortium partners (see 4.6 of the ISA Consortium agreement) and are offered free of charge to all partners alike.

The PMASP Pre-trial investigation benefits from its inclusion in the ISA consortium, which facilitates collaboration among institutions to enhance legal education. This joint framework ensures the integration of interdisciplinary expertise and practical applications, particularly through internships and research opportunities, leveraging the collective resources and knowledge of participating institutions. However, the programme currently lacks a formal mechanism for systematically identifying, tracking, and incorporating best practices from international legal education and investigative training. Such mechanisms could include structured partnerships with foreign institutions, regular benchmarking against internationally recognized standards, or participation in global academic and professional networks. Implementing these measures could enhance the programme's global relevance, expose students to diverse legal systems and practices, and provide a more comprehensive and competitive educational experience.

2.3.2. Not applicable

2.3.3. The necessary funds for the running of the programme results from the state budget subsidy. Programme costs are calculated with a methodology, taking into account all different cost factors with percentage ratios, transparently broken down in the SAR p. 221, 222 (cost items and percentages of the grand total allocated to the different cost items). An additional figure shows in a

graph the cost-effectiveness of the break - even point according to student figures and fees for all modes of delivery (FTI, PTI and PTE). The programme is expected to enroll 45 students.

The full state-budget funding allows for the running of the programme without support from other financial resources. State budget funding is used for all aspects of curriculum development. The UL Study Quality Improvement Fund could be used to obtain further funding if needed. Research funding for academic staff are also connected and financed by the development of the PMASP Pre-trial investigation.

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

For the PMASP Pre-trial investigation there is as of now a sufficient basis of quality premises, literature, databases and forensic equipment, shared by the ISA consortium partners. Necessary technical and forensic equipment has to be shared by the consortium partners according to clearly defined parameters.

In talks with the PMASP Pre-trial investigation management, it was mentioned that specialized literature sources will be added to the library in due course to stack resources with study and research materials fit for the highly specialized curriculum parts of the near future study semesters.

Financially, the PMASP Pre-trial investigation, overall state budget funded and free of charge for those students that fulfill the criteria for a free study environment, is financially sound. Currently, potentially high dropout rates are tackled with an initiative to even more intensively inform students about the prerequisites of the programme and its parameters. A programme free of charge seems to be somewhat extremely tempting, letting aside the challenging workload of such a study. Therefore, unrealistic expectations might lead to high dropout rates. As the programme is advertised and perceived as an excellent career opportunity there is no doubt that the projected student numbers will be reached.

Students have different opportunities to graduate at different stages, such as graduating as 'Pre-trial Investigator' or going on to the National Central Law Exam and qualifying as a lawyer. In talking to current students, they are well aware of the possibilities and challenges the programme poses.

Strengths:

- 1) The PMASP Pre-trial investigation is backed by the ISA consortium, sharing resources.
- 2) The study programme is well received by students and attractive for them because it offers a free of charge study and excellent career chances.
- 3) The study is state budget funded and resources will greatly be provided by state budget sources as well.
- 4) There is long-term financial stability.
- 5) There is no competition by other educational institutions for the consortium.
- 6) The PMASP Pre-trial investigation offers the possibility to graduate either as a 'Pre-trial investigator' or as a lawyer after taking the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a

lawyer.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Library sources have to be replenished with all literature and possibly databases that are needed to meet the expectations of the highly specialized studies of Pre-trial investigation.
- 2) The UL does not have adequate space and equipment for conducting various investigative trainings and experiments.

### **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Assessment is based on analysis of SAR materials, p. 50 ff., 253 ff. and discussions at assessment visit.

PMASP Pre-trial investigation has a stable and sufficient state funding. As of yet, special literature and forensic equipment needs have to be tackled within the premises of UL FL and in the consortium.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. The UL FL teaching staff involved in the implementation of the PMASP Pre-trial investigation complies with requirements and regulatory enactments, as is explained in full detail in the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.) and documented throughout the relevant annexes (for discrepancies in the provided data and documentation please see chapter 1.4.). Table 7.4.1.1. in the SAR shows that the majority of the teaching staff holds the highest academic positions (professor and associate professor), which due to the strict election procedure at the UL and the highly competitive election criteria ensures a high standard of the implementation of the study process. There is also a high share of involvement of associate professors in the study programme implementation (slightly above the regulatory proportion), as well as lower share of lectures. There is a very high share of teaching staff with a doctoral degree, whereby this group clearly makes up the majority of the teaching staff (72.2%). 36 teaching staff will be involved in the provision of all study courses (30 of them are elected faculty members of the University of Latvia).

The main idea of the ISA Consortium to ensure mutual involvement of teaching staff among the consortium partners ensures a well-balanced distribution between theoretical and practical learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. This is well reflected in the study programme design and on the level of single study courses. There are however discrepancies between the UL FL teaching staff listed in Annex 6 and the study programme's course description with regard to the teaching staff of courses (both in the English language version and the national language), which is then also reflected in lack of CVs in Annex 7 and lack of publication lists in

Annex 9. Irrespective of whether and how the said discrepancies might impact an overall analysis on the level of teaching staff's qualifications, those CVs and publication lists available demonstrate an overwhelmingly high level of teaching staff's qualifications, experience, research production and relevance for the study field. The study programme will be implemented by an excellent faculty - 13 professors and associate professors, which is quite high among professional study programmes in Latvia according to the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.).

It needs to be stressed that there is generally a high positive assessment of the teaching staff's qualifications and competences, which are also strongly valued by students of all UL FL programmes (based on the feedback received during the assessment visit), especially with regards to their leading positions in the most prominent judicial, police and governmental institutions of Latvia.

According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.), given the relatively small number of prospective students and the form of studies (part-time intramural), there is currently no perceived risk that existing teaching staff will not be able to provide quality teaching in study courses - it is however planned to attract new teaching staff (permanent employment at the UL and by using faculty mobility opportunities from the ISA Consortium). ISA Consortium partners are involved in the management, review and defense of the final theses from the outset of the programme.

2.4.2. According to the SAR (p. 261) there have been no significant changes in the composition of the teaching staff since the programme was licensed. The implementation of the study programme has started in the academic year 2023/2024, and in the 1st academic year 24 teaching staff are involved in the programme implementation, whereas the total number of teaching staff to be involved in the study programme is 36.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. The lecturers involved in the PMASP Pre-trial investigation have a rich volume of publications (Annex: 9 publications Study field Law 2024.docx). Almost all lecturers have international publications indexed in databases Scopus and/or Web of Science. Those few lecturers who do not have publications or have only national publications have more than five years of work experience in the work environment related to the taught course of study (Annex No. 7, CV EUROPASS Curriculum Vitae).

The information provided in the UL annexes is sufficient to demonstrate that the teaching staff has published in peer-reviewed publications, including international editions, or possesses adequate practical experience in the field over the past six years. However, to enhance clarity and comprehensiveness from UL's perspective, further details regarding improvements in the annexes and the provided information are outlined in section 1.4 of the expert report.

2.4.5. According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.5.), there are clear mechanisms foreseen for ensuring mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, both on the level of the study programme as well as on the level of specific study courses. The responsibility for ensuring that uniform requirements are met in the teaching of courses of study rests with a course tutor appointed by the Dean. Meetings of heads of departments and study programme directors are held with regularity to discuss various issues related to the organisation of the study process. Given the specificity of the programme within the ISA Consortium, cooperation takes place not only within the UL FL, but also among the teaching staff of the UL and RSU and the College, as well as representatives of sectoral internship sites involved in the implementation of the programme.

The current student-staff ratio (1) is likely to increase and due to the early phase of the study programme implementation is rather uninformative.

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

The teaching staff is very qualified with a high share of teaching staff elected to highest academic positions at the UL FL. The teaching staff's profiles (Annex 7) show that these are leading experts in all subfields of law and its practice which is of particular importance for the study programmes' goal, its tasks and results. The qualifications of the teaching staff are fully compliant with the relevant provisions, whereby the only reservation in this regard relates to the discrepancies about the teaching staff provided across different annexes and data (see introduction to chapter 1.4.). The teaching staff represents Latvia's leading law experts and professionals in (mainly the highest) elected academic positions. There are clear mechanisms foreseen for ensuring mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, both on the level of the study programme as well as on the level of specific study courses.

Strengths:

- 1) Highly qualified teaching staff with strong professional experience and competences necessary for successfully implementing the study programmes' goal, tasks and results;
- 2) Adequate and timely response to the increase of demand for criminal investigators on the labour market and meaningful cooperation via the ISA Consortium;
- 3) High appeal of the study programme due to the heavy involvement of leading legal experts and practitioners holding top-positions in judiciary and advocacy and government.

Weaknesses:

none

### **Assessment of the requirement [7]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The assessment is based on the analysis as provided for criteria 2.4.1.-2.4.5. and based on data provided in the relevant annexes as cited in section 2.4.1.-2.4.5., thus strongly relying on the findings of the assessment visit as well as open source data (e.g. professional experience of teaching staff for whom this information was not provided in the relevant annexes).

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex 17.5 "Compliance of the professional master's study programme "Pre-trial Investigation" with the State Education Standard" affirms that programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 13.06.2023 Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Annex 18.3 "Compliance of the professional master's study programme "Pre-trial Investigation" with the occupational standard" affirms that programme complies with Lawyer's occupational standard, agreed at the Vocational Education and Employment Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council at its meeting of 8 April 2020, Minutes No. 3.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided course descriptions in Annex 22 5 "Descriptions study courses PMSP Pre-trial Investigation 2024.docx" are available in both Latvian and English languages, although the programme is implemented only in Latvian.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The diploma example available in Annex 15\_5\_DIPLOMA\_PMSP\_Pre-trial investigation.zip is compliant with the Cabinet of Ministers 16.04.2013 Regulation No. 202 "Procedures by which documents certifying higher education recognised by the State shall be issued".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "24.04.2024 - 20-13\_46 - Declaration - Latvian language of the academic.edoc.pdf" affirms that the knowledge of Latvian language of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 08.03.2022 Regulation No. 157 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "Examples of agreement.zip" containing study agreements fully complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 23.01.2007 Regulation No. 70 "Rules to be included in the study agreement".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided information in Annex "DECLARATION.ZIP" (Declaration of Rector of University of Latvia G. Bērziņš) affirms that students are provided with opportunities to continue their education in the UL in the professional master study programme Law (47380) of the study field Law, if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "Refund and Compensation Policy\_EN.docx" states that the UL shall guarantee compensation for students if study programme is not accredited due to the action (activity or failure to act) of the UL or the licence of the study programme is revoked and the student does

not wish to continue studies in another study programme

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The submitted documents certify that the requirement specified in clause 2.3 of the agreement "Agreement establishing consortium "Internal Security Academy" (ISA)" has been fulfilled: within the consortium Higher Education Institutions, by mutual agreement, will develop, license and, from September 1, 2023, implement six study programmes at the expense of the state budget, including - Professional Master Study Program "Pre-trial investigation" (LKI-7)

### **Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

PMASP Pre-trial investigation meets all the formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions, and Cabinet of Ministers regulations, issued in accordance with the law.

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

PMASP Pre-trial investigation meets formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Cabinet of Ministers regulations "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education" and "Procedures for the Uniform State Professional Qualification Examination of a Lawyer".

The curriculum of PMASP Pre-trial investigation includes study courses in all five areas in which the Lawyers unified exam must be taken. Evaluating study course descriptions, it should be concluded that all five areas of the exam are taught at a sufficient level. Since the time for taking the exam in this program has not yet started, then it is difficult to judge the level of acquired knowledge.

UL does not have adequate space and equipment for conducting various investigative trainings and experiments, necessary for implementation of PMASP Pre-trial investigation.

Internship is intended only in the field of criminal law. This may cause consequences that practical skills are obtained in criminal law but missing in other areas of law.

PMASP Pre-trial investigation implementation is possible in all declared implementation options - full time studies, part time studies and part time extramural studies in Latvian.

Strengths:

- 1) Students are guaranteed job opportunities in law enforcement institutions for at least five years

after graduating from the programme.

2) Highly qualified teaching staff with strong professional experience and competences necessary for successfully implementing the study programmes' goal, tasks and results.

3) Adequate and timely response to the increase of demand for criminal investigators on the labour market and meaningful cooperation via the ISA Consortium.

Weaknesses:

1) Internship is intended only in the field of criminal law. This may cause consequences that practical skills are obtained in criminal law but missing in other areas of law.

2) UL does not have adequate space and equipment for conducting various investigative trainings and experiments, so closer cooperation should be established with the other members of the consortium, such as the Police College, which has such equipment.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Pre-trial Investigation"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Pre-trial Investigation"**

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

1) Add any literature and databases to the library that will be needed for study and research within the very specialized coursework of pre-trial investigation.

2) Strengthen the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills in other areas (not only criminal law) required for passing the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer.

#### **Long-term recommendations**

1) Introduce English or other foreign language options within the programme to enhance international appeal, and foster the development of global competencies among students.

2) Provide the necessary premises and equipment for the specific needs of the PMASP Pre-trial investigation.

## **II - "Law" ASSESSMENT**

### **II - "Law" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

2.1.1. The Professional Master (Second-cycle) Study Programme "Law" 47380 (PMASP Law) complies with the study field "Law" (study field) by integrating theoretical and practical elements essential

for legal education. The PMASP Law aligns with the Latvian national qualification framework, fulfilling the requirements of the professional standard for lawyers. It covers core legal areas such as civil law, criminal law, administrative law, and international law, providing comprehensive preparation for legal practice. The structure ensures consistency with European and national legal education standards, maintaining relevance in the academic and occupational contexts.

2.1.2. The title “Law” accurately reflects the programme’s objectives to provide advanced legal education and prepare graduates for the professional qualification of a lawyer. The programme code “47380” aligns with the second-cycle professional education and its classification under the thematic area of “Law.” This ensures compliance with the national and European frameworks for professional legal education (SAR, p. 102).

The degree obtained, “Professional Master’s Degree in Law,” and the professional qualification of “Lawyer” are consistent with the programme’s aims, which focus on equipping students with in-depth theoretical knowledge and advanced practical skills necessary for legal practice. The defined learning outcomes emphasize critical legal analysis, problem-solving, and ethical conduct, which align seamlessly with the aims and objectives of the study programme. These include fostering a comprehensive understanding of legal theory and its application across various subfields of law, such as civil, criminal, administrative, and international law.

The admission requirements are stringent, requiring prior academic or professional education in law. Candidates must pass an entrance examination, ensuring they possess the foundational knowledge necessary to meet the demands of the programme. The structure and scope of the programme are also tailored to align with these prerequisites, offering a balance between theoretical coursework and practical training, including internships and preparation for the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer.

As described in the SAR (p. 103), the duration and implementation options, spanning four semesters of full-time intramural studies, are reasonable and justified in the context of achieving the defined learning outcomes and professional qualification. The PMASP Law implementation language, predominantly Latvian, ensures accessibility for local students while reflecting the national focus of the legal profession. However, the introduction of additional language options could further enhance accessibility for international students or non-Latvian speakers. Overall, the title, code, degree, qualification, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are intricately interrelated, ensuring the PMASP Law coherence and alignment with its intended purpose.

2.1.3. During the reporting period, adjustments were made to align the programme with ECTS requirements and updated regulations (SAR, p. 101). Credits were recalibrated to whole numbers, ensuring compliance without compromising content or quality. For example, “Civil Law Internship” was reduced to 13 ECTS, while “Criminal Law Internship” was increased to 14 ECTS to maintain balance and meet professional standards. Free elective courses (Part C) were introduced to provide students with additional flexibility and interdisciplinary opportunities, while restricted elective courses (Part B) were updated to reflect modern legal trends and enhance the programme’s relevance. These changes were carefully evaluated and supported to ensure alignment with national standards and academic objectives.

2.1.4. As demonstrated in the SAR (p. 103-104), the PMASP Law demonstrates strong economic and social relevance by addressing the national need for qualified legal professionals, as highlighted in labour market projections. The demand for high-skilled jobs in public administration, business services, and legal professions supports the PMASP Law importance. Graduates achieve high

employability, with 86% employed during their final year of studies, and 93% working in fields directly related to their education. The introduction of the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer has increased the rigour of graduate qualifications, ensuring alignment with market needs. The number of enrolled students has remained stable, demonstrating the programme's appeal. However, the relatively high drop-out rate, with 151 students exmatriculated during the reporting period, highlights challenges such as balancing academic and professional responsibilities or failing the National Unified Qualification Examination for Lawyers. Measures such as re-admission opportunities and targeted support for final examination preparation mitigate these challenges, contributing to the programme's overall success in producing competent legal professionals.

During the assessment visit, students highlighted the need for enhanced academic support and counseling, especially for those struggling to pass the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer. Given that passing this exam is a prerequisite for graduation, providing tailored support is crucial to ensure student success and timely program completion.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The PMASP Law demonstrates robust alignment with national priorities and labour market demands, preparing graduates for diverse opportunities in legal professions. The PMASP Law structure ensures a comprehensive approach to legal education, supported by a rigorous framework for theoretical and practical knowledge acquisition. Its stable enrolment rates and high employment indicators reflect its relevance and appeal. However, challenges persist, including relatively high drop-out rates and the need for enhanced support for students preparing for the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer. Addressing these areas would further strengthen the programme's impact and effectiveness.

Strengths:

- 1) The PMASP Law demonstrates strong alignment with national labour market needs, equipping graduates with the skills and competencies to excel in diverse legal professions. Graduates are highly regarded by employers, with the majority successfully employed in roles directly related to their education, reflecting their readiness to meet professional expectations.
- 2) Rigorous academic and professional standards, supported by the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer.
- 3) Stable enrolment rates demonstrate consistent interest and relevance of the programme.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Relatively high drop-out rates, particularly due to the challenges of balancing academic and professional commitments.
- 2) Limited proactive measures to support students in preparing for the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer.

## 2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

### Analysis

2.2.1. The content of the PMASP Law corresponds to the objectives of the programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes. The assessment of the programme's aim and outcomes shows that the content of the PMASP Law, the content of the study courses fully achieves the programme's aim and outcomes, and that the PMASP Law is oriented to the needs of the labour market and the legal science (SAR, p.133).

The content of the PMASP Law is strongly regulated by external regulatory requirements. PMASP Law content complies with national regulations:

- 1) with state education standards - with the Cabinet of Ministers 13.06.2023 Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education" (Annex 17.2 "Compliance of the professional master's study programme "Law" with the State Education Standard");
- 2) with professional qualification requirements - with Lawyer's occupational standard, agreed at the Vocational Education and Employment Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council at its meeting of 8 April 2020, Minutes No. 3 (Annex 18.1 "Compliance of the professional master's study programme "Law" with the occupational standard").

The compulsory (A) part, in accordance with the laws and regulations, includes study courses that provide in-depth study of the most recent developments in theory and practice in various subfields of law. The compulsory part includes: Current Problems of Administrative Law, topical developments of International and EU law, International private law and international civil procedure in the European Union, European contract and tort law, Theory of Legal Methods, Commercial Law, Constitutional Law. Process, Current Issues in Qualification of Criminal Offences, Problematic Issues in Legal Theory, Legal Philosophy and Latvian Legal History, Market, Law of market, competition and management of economic activity. Three internships are also included as Part A courses to the extent required by law: Administrative and Legal Practice, Civil law internship and Praxis of Criminal Law. The programme concludes with a final examination, consisting of a master's thesis and the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer (Annex 21.2 "Curriculum of the Professional master's study programme "LAW").

The courses in the restricted elective (B) part are designed to offer students a wide choice of courses in different subfields of law. The wide range of Part B courses offers student choice (choose from 21 courses) (Annex 21.2 "Curriculum of the Professional master's study programme "LAW") and, to some extent, the opportunity to specialize in an area of interest.

However, as was found out during the assessment visit, students do not really have the opportunity to choose one of the study courses from part B. It was told by students that there should be at least 25 students to open an optional group. Therefore, students have to take the courses for which the most students have applied.

2.2.2. The master degree after completing the PMASP Law is awarded in view of the developments and findings in the field of law science. Most of the teaching staff involved in the programme have doctoral degrees in law and qualifications as lawyers, and are the authors of the most significant publications and research in the relevant subfield of law, thus their pedagogical, scientific and practical activities fully correspond to the thematic area of the study field and the programme, as well as ensure the acquisition of the most up-to-date theoretical knowledge (SAR, p. 107).

The final examination - the defense of the master's thesis - requires the student, for example, to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the methods of scientific research applicable in law and to strengthen the skills of their application, the ability to identify legal problems and to provide reasoned solutions to them, the ability to demonstrate in-depth understanding of the latest developments in law on the chosen legal concept studied in the master's thesis, to analyse systematically the regularities of theory and practice, applying previously acquired theoretical knowledge and being aware of contemporary issues in the aspect of the studied concept, to explain own opinion and discuss complex and/or systemic aspects of legal science in an argumentative manner, to advance the skills of polemics with other legal specialists, to demonstrate the ability to justify own conclusions and to make proposals for improving the legal regulation or the legal environment.

2.2.3. The study implementation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centered learning and teaching principles are considered. Oral, written and combined methods of study delivery and assessment are used during the study courses and examinations. The student-centered approach is observed in updating the study programmes and the respective study courses, paying special attention to meaningful formulation of learning outcomes, thus promoting the dialogue between teaching staff and students on the content of studies, forms and methods of organization. Well-formulated learning outcomes, on the other hand, promote students' understanding and co-responsibility for their own learning, self-evaluation, and understanding of the assessment they receive (SAR, p. 108).

In the study process, lecturers use methods, forms of assessment and evaluation criteria that are consistent with the study aim and the planned learning outcomes.

2.2.4. The programme includes three types of internships to equip students with practical skills in different sub-fields and to be competitive: Civil law internship (1st semester) (13 CP); Praxis of Criminal Law (2nd semester) (14 CP); Administrative and Legal Practice (3rd semester) 12 (CP). In total, internship is included in the amount of 39 CP (Annex 21.2 "Curriculum of the Professional master's study program "LAW"), which meets the standard requirements of professional education - internship in the amount of at least 39 credit points if it is intended for graduates of a bachelor's study programme in academic education (Annex 17. 2 "Compliance of the professional master's study program "Law" with the State Education Standard").

In order to successfully complete the internship, students must complete the internship within the set deadlines, prepare and successfully defend the internship report, and solve a practical task (legal case). Detailed criteria for the assessment of study internships are specified in the programme and course description of each study internship. In addition, internships are regulated by the Regulations on Student Internships approved by the FL Council. Each internship course description and programme specifies the aims and objectives of the specific internship, the procedures for preparing, presenting and defending the internship report, and the principles of assessment (SAR, p. 110).

The internship complies with the regulatory enactments: Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 305 "Regulations on the State Standard for Professional Higher Education" and Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 481 "Practice organization procedure in professional education programs".

As demonstrated in the SAR (p. 110-111), the tasks of internships allow to achieve the overall outcomes of the study programme, i.e. in internships students acquire the knowledge to independently identify legal problems, plan their solution options and provide reasoned and

qualitative solutions to legal problems, as well as to organise legal analysis, discuss legal problems with specialists in law and other fields (for example, employees of the internship placement, who are not necessarily lawyers). During their internships, students have developed the skills to apply theory independently to solve specific problems, to explain and discuss complex aspects of law reasonably, to take responsibility and initiative when working individually or in a team, and to make decisions and find creative solutions. Interns also strengthen their ability to integrate knowledge from different fields, contributing to the creation of new knowledge and understanding their ethical responsibility for the potential impact of their professional activities on society.

#### 2.2.5. Not applicable

2.2.6. As described in chapter 3.2.6 of the SAR, students choose the topics of their master's theses individually, but sometimes the idea comes from research topics recommended by the institutions cooperating with the FL, such as the Ministry of Justice, Supreme Court, Ombudsman, Prison Administration, Ministry of Welfare, etc. These institutions provide suggestions for the topic of the final thesis each year or every other year, proposing an extended list of under-researched issues related to the institution's activities, which is uploaded to the e-studies in the master's thesis section of the course. Often, students also get ideas for their master's thesis during their internships.

When assessing the topics submitted by students, considerable attention is paid to the relevance of the topic from theoretical and practical perspectives. Particular emphasis is placed on research on fundamental issues, which require more in-depth knowledge and skills than in the academic bachelor's programme. The processes taking place in Latvia and the world have also determined the choice of topics for Master's theses in a given year.

All the chosen topics of the master's theses are in line with the current trends in the field and are mainly aimed at the improvement of the legal system. The FL is pleased that the master's theses defended at the Faculty are also of interest to institutions and professional organisations working in the field of justice, which would like to get acquainted with the theses in order to possibly use the ideas expressed in the theses in further practical work ( naturally, respecting the copyright of the authors of the theses). This confirms that the defended master's theses are qualitatively elaborated, their topics are topical in practice, and the scientific knowledge presented in the master's theses is applied in the improvement of the Latvian legal regulation and practice.

The defense of the master's thesis takes place in an open final examination defense session, where the board consists of the faculty teaching staff and invited representatives of professional organisations (judges of various courts, delegated representatives of the Latvian Council of Sworn Advocates, etc.). The Board is approved by the UL Rector's Order on the proposal of the FL Council. Following the defense of the theses, the evaluation decision is taken by the Board in closed session.

The topics of students' master's theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme. The high level of master's theses at the FL is confirmed by the fact that every year several graduates of the FL win prizes for their master's theses in the "Jurista Vārds" student research competition (information about the winners of the competition and sections is also available in the "Jurista Vārds" journal (SAR, p. 114).

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

The content of the PMASP Law and the content of the study courses fully correspond to the purpose

and results of the programme. The programme is oriented to the needs of the labour market and scientific trends in the field of Law. The compliance of the study content with the development trends of the industry, the labour market and science is controlled by the director of the study programme and the study direction council, which also includes representatives of employers.

The PMASP Law was created taking into account the interrelationship of study courses, thus allowing the study programme to achieve its goal. The content of the programme is strongly influenced by external regulatory requirements: regulations on the national professional higher education standard, requirements of the Lawyer profession standard, procedure for taking the Unified lawyer professional qualification state exam.

The PMASP Law continues the preparation started in the bachelor's programme for the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer. Advanced knowledge is taught in all five areas of law: civil law, criminal law, state law, international law, and legal theory and philosophy. In addition to that - "Lawyer qualification exam" is included as a separate study course, which is implemented by all teaching staff involved in the program.

The wide range of Part B courses offers students choice (choose from 24 courses) and the opportunity to specialize in an area of interest, however, it is not always possible for students to choose study courses from part B according to their interests. Some of the elective courses are taught in English, giving students the opportunity to improve their knowledge of legal terminology in English. However, during the assessment visit, the students indicated that these courses are mainly intended for Erasmus+ incoming mobility students.

The topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme. The content of the programme, the content of the study courses fully corresponds to the purpose and results of the programme. The programme is oriented to the needs of the labour market and scientific trends in the science branch "Law". The program complies with national regulations - regulations on the national professional higher education standard, requirements of the lawyer profession standard, procedure for taking the Unified lawyer professional qualification state exam.

Strengths:

1) The PMASP Law prepares students to successfully pass the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer.

Weaknesses:

1) It is not always possible for students to choose study courses from part B according to their interests.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The PMASP Law is based on the achievements and findings of the field of Law science.

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

#### **Analysis**

2.3.1. The PMASP Law doesn't require additional specific resources apart from the study and research provisions of the library, including databases and eBook section. Information provisions are discussed and clearly represented in SAR, chapters 2.3.1 - 2.3.3 (p.50 ff).

Library resources are checked on a regular basis and supplemented with newer editions, both in the print and the electronic version. Requests for the purchase of study and research literature can be placed at any given time by teaching staff.

Subscribed online databases are very much in demand by students, some of those being available in most HEIs, such as VLeBooks with electronically accessible books. Other databases are available to teaching staff and students of the FL only, stocking and giving access to legal journals and comments on rulings of different court systems (for example Heinonline, Kluwer, Westlaw and others).

Which study and research sources should be accessed is described in the relevant course materials in Moodle.

2.3.2. Not applicable

2.3.3. For the implementation of the PMASP Law, the state budget subsidy from the Ministry of Education and Science plus tuition fees are used.

As described in chapter 3.3.3. of the SAR, of currently 302 students in the programme, 14 full-time study places are state-funded and 228 places are fee-paying. The UL cost calculating methodology leads to a cost of the programme per student and year of 3.000 €. Cost-effectiveness is reached with the minimum number of 300 fee-paying and state-funded students.

With general cost rising, tuition fees had to be raised accordingly in 2024. The rise was calculated by the Financial Department and the calculation transparently shared with the Student Council.

The PMASP Law is profitable.

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

Students and graduates of the PMASP Law have uttered their general satisfaction with the study provisions and the study and research conditions. They described courses, teaching and supervision as flawless. Supervisors and lecturers are seen as approachable and helpful. The financing of the programme is stable and profitable.

Strengths:

1) Sufficient and updated information infrastructure.

2) Access to relevant databases of Latvian and international origin.

3) Readily accessible and helpful academic and administrative staff.

Weaknesses:

none

## **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Assessment is based on analysis of SAR material, p. 50 ff., 114 ff. and discussions at assessment visit. PMASP "Law" is a well composed and equipped programme with sufficient resources and stable financing.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. The UL FL teaching staff involved in the implementation of the PMASP Law complies with requirements and regulatory enactments, as is explained in full detail in the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.) and documented throughout the relevant annexes (for discrepancies in the provided data and documentation please see chapter 1.4.). Table 4.4.2.1. in the SAR shows that the majority of the teaching staff holds the highest academic positions (professor and associate professor), which due to the strict election procedure at the UL and the highly competitive election criteria ensures a high standard of the implementation of the study process. There is also a high share of involvement of associate professors in the study programme implementation with only 1-2 lectures throughout the past few academic years. There is a very high share of teaching staff with a doctoral degree (in 2023/2024 a total of 26 teaching staff – out of all 28 teaching staff – held a PhD), whereby this group clearly makes up the vast majority of all the teaching staff throughout all academic years since 2019/2020. 28 teaching staff will be involved in the provision of all the programme's study courses.

It needs to be stressed that there is generally a high positive assessment of the teaching staff's qualifications and competences (survey results), which are also strongly valued by students of all UL FL programmes (based on the feedback received during the assessment visit), especially with regards to their leading positions in the most prominent judicial and governmental institutions of Latvia (judges, sworn advocates and other practitioners). This is of particular importance with regards to the study program at hand as it is a professional study program, for which professional skills and competences as well as knowledge of the teaching staff are of great importance.

2.4.2. Although according to the SAR (chapter 3.4.2. and table 4.4.2.1.) the number of teaching staff has slightly decreased from 32 to 28 between 2019/2020 and 2023/2024, this has had no negative impact with regards to the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments. The composition of the teaching staff is rather stable, whereas according to the SAR (chapter 3.4.2.) it is

expected that the number of teaching staff might slightly increase due to new doctors as teaching staff and doctoral students.

#### 2.4.3. Not applicable

2.4.4. The teaching staff involved in the PMASP Law demonstrates significant research productivity and professional engagement, meeting the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, with only one exception (as explained further in this section).

According to Annex 9 ("Publications of Academic Staff"), between 2018 and 2023, the staff collectively published 113 international scientific articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, ensuring global visibility and academic contribution. Additionally, 127 publications were indexed in reputable databases such as Erih+ and Ebsco, further broadening the dissemination of their research findings (Annex 9, Publications of Academic Staff). Nationally, the faculty produced 158 scientific publications, maintaining a strong presence in Latvian legal academia (Annex 9, Publications of Academic Staff).

Participation in academic conferences reflects active engagement in scholarly discourse, with 439 international conferences and 57 national conferences attended by staff during this period (Annex 8, Scientific and Artistic Creation). This aligns with the programme's aim to integrate cutting-edge research into its curriculum.

Key individual contributions exemplify the faculty's research and professional strengths. For instance, lecturer as an authority in civil law, contributed eight Scopus-indexed publications and presented at 14 international conferences, reinforcing the programme's focus on advanced legal knowledge (Annex 7).

Practical experience among faculty members further strengthens the programme. Fifteen staff members possess over five years of direct legal practice in areas such as criminal, civil, or administrative law, bridging theoretical knowledge with professional application. This dual expertise ensures that students receive education grounded in both academic rigor and real-world relevance (Annex 7).

Despite these strengths, areas for improvement remain. Approximately 30% of staff primarily publish in national outlets, which, while valuable, limit the programme's global academic impact. Expanding the scope of publications to include more internationally indexed journals would elevate the programme's visibility and competitiveness (Annex 6, Teaching Staff Data). Additionally, not all staff maintain active profiles in databases like Scopus or Web of Science, restricting the visibility of their academic contributions. Efforts to improve tracking systems, such as mandating Scopus or Web of Science profiles for all teaching staff, would facilitate better monitoring of academic outputs. Moreover, during the assessment visit, it was noted that faculty research projects are not consistently integrated into teaching materials or student learning opportunities (SAR, p. 127). Systematically incorporating faculty research into the curriculum could enhance the programme's academic depth and foster a more research-driven learning environment.

Out of all the teaching staff involved in implementing the PMASP Law (full-time) the conducted analysis (based on the available data provided in the SAR: Annexes to the SAR - Annex 6. Basic information on the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study field "Law"; Annex 7. CV EUROPASS; Annex 9: publications Study field Law 2024) revealed that one of the teaching staff members does not meet the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions as defined in

the criterion at hand. The said teaching staff member co-teaches 4 courses (Trending developments of the international and the EU law; International Justice I; International Justice II; International Justice III), whereby no proof of having published in international peer-reviewed editions or having five years of practical experience (except for experience in the implementation of the study programme) in the last six years has been provided.

In conclusion, the FL quantity and quality of publications, combined with their professional and academic contributions, adequately support the programme's quality and implementation in the field of law. While the FL achievements are commendable, strategic enhancements in international publications, research integration, and output tracking would further strengthen the programme's academic and global standing.

2.4.5. According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.5.), there are clear mechanisms foreseen for ensuring mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, both on the level of the study programme as well as on the level of specific study courses. The Dean approves the teaching staff member responsible for a particular course, who is directly responsible for ensuring that uniform requirements are met. At the beginning of each academic year, the study programme director and the dean inform the staff involved in the study programme at a staff meeting about the number of students enrolled, their previous education, as well as remind them of the principles common to the implementation of the study programme in the choice of teaching methods. Study courses that involve several teaching staff has a responsible teaching staff member who ensures that the organisational requirements are met, whereas for several study courses, the course description is developed by one lecturer, but other lecturers are also involved in teaching the study course. Cooperation is ensured by: 1) the director of the study program tracking the content of the study course, communicating with teaching staff if needed; 2) the teaching staff member responsible for a particular course coordinating/communicating with other teaching staff members involved in the implementation of that course for the purpose of harmonisation; 3) harmonisation between teaching staff to ensure uniform approaches, incl. the grading of tests. The director of the study program carries out supervision on a regular basis, whereas the teaching staff responsible for the course continuously coordinates other course teaching staff members.

The current student-staff ratio is 12, which according to the SAR is assessed as stable in relation to the previous reporting period.

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

The teaching staff is overwhelmingly qualified with a high share of teaching staff elected to highest academic positions at the UL FL, whereby the vast majority of the teaching staff holds a PhD. The teaching staff's profiles (Annex 7) show that these are leading experts in all subfields of law and its practice which is of particular importance for the study programmes' goal, its tasks and results. The qualifications of the teaching staff are fully compliant with the relevant provisions, whereby the only reservation in this regard relates to the discrepancies about the teaching staff provided across different annexes and data (see introduction to chapter 1.4.). The teaching staff represents Latvia's leading law experts and professionals in (mainly the highest) elected academic positions. There are clear mechanisms foreseen for ensuring mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, both on the level of the study programme as well as on the level of specific study courses (esp. when several teaching staff are implementing a course jointly).

Strengths:

- 1) Highly qualified teaching staff with strong professional experience and competences necessary for successfully implementing the study programmes' goal, tasks and results.
- 2) High appeal of the study programme due to the heavy involvement of leading legal experts and practitioners holding top-positions in judiciary and advocacy and government.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Lack of teaching staff's realistically planned and transparently provided workload of students within many of the study courses that does not match the course's ECTS.

## Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The assessment is based on the analysis as provided for criteria 2.4.1.-2.4.5. and based on the data provided in the relevant annexes as cited in section 2.4.1.-2.4.5. while strongly relying on the findings of the assessment visit as well as open source data (e.g. about teaching staff's practical experience in case this data was not available in the relevant annexes).

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex 17.2 "Compliance of the professional master's study programme "Law" with the State Education Standard" affirms that programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 13.06.2023 Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex 18.1 "Compliance of the professional master's study programme "Law" with the occupational standard" affirms that programme complies with Lawyer's occupational standard, agreed at the Vocational Education and Employment Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council at its meeting of 8 April 2020, Minutes No. 3.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided course descriptions in Annex "22 2 Descriptions study courses PMSP Law 2024.docx" are available in both Latvian and English languages, although the programme is implemented only in Latvian.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The diploma example available in Annex 15\_2\_DIPLOMA\_PMSP\_LAW.zip is compliant with the Cabinet of Ministers 16.04.2013 Regulation No. 202 "Procedures by which documents certifying higher education recognised by the State shall be issued".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "24.04.2024 - 20-13\_46 - Declaration - Latvian language of the academic.edoc.pdf" affirms that the knowledge of Latvian language of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 08.03.2022 Regulation No. 157 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "Examples of agreement.zip" containing study agreements fully complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 23.01.2007 Regulation No. 70 "Rules to be included in the study agreement".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided information in Annex "DECLARATION.ZIP" (Agreement between UL and Riga Stradins University (RSU)) affirms that students are provided with opportunities to continue their education in the RSU in the professional master study programme "Law" (47380) of the study field "Law", if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "Refund and Compensation Policy\_EN.docx" states that the UL shall guarantee compensation for students if study programme is not accredited due to the action (activity or failure to act) of the UL or the licence of the study programme is revoked and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex 21.2 "Curriculum of the Professional master's study programme "LAW"" affirms that in curriculum is included study course "JurZE000 Lawyer's qualification exam", with 6 ECTS, according to the Cabinet Regulation No. 46, Adopted 15 January 2019 "Procedures for the Uniform State Professional Qualification Examination of a Lawyer".

The submitted documents certify that the requirement specified in clause 2.3 of the agreement "Agreement establishing consortium "Internal Security Academy" (ISA)" has been fulfilled: within the consortium Higher Education Institutions, by mutual agreement, will develop, license and, from September 1, 2023, implement six study programmes at the expense of the state budget, including - professional master study program "Pre-trial investigation" (LKI-7).

**Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

PMASP Law meets all the formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions, and Cabinet of Ministers regulations, issued in accordance with the law.

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

PMASP Law meets all the formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Cabinet of Ministers regulations "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education" and "Procedures for the Uniform State Professional Qualification Examination of a Lawyer". The PMASP Law is professional, it is exceptionally practical. The PMASP Law has excellent teachers, practitioners, and demonstrates good study results, this is evidenced by the relatively large number of passers of the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer. The fact that "only" 42% passed the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer is a good result, because the exam is very difficult, lasts two weeks and requires a lot of endurance from the students. Study programme implementation is possible in full time studies in Latvian.

Overall, the PMASP Law showcases significant strengths and demonstrates a high level of quality, warranting a very positive evaluation. However, due to the absence of a formal option to rate it as 'very good,' and in light of the identified weaknesses that affect certain aspects of its implementation, the PMASP Law cannot be deemed flawless. Taking these factors into account, the expert group recommends assessing the programme as 'good' while recognizing its strong potential for further improvement to achieve a higher evaluation in the future.

#### Strengths:

- 1) Strong alignment with national labour market needs, providing graduates with high employability and opportunities in diverse legal professions.
- 2) Highly qualified teaching staff with strong professional experience and competences necessary for successfully implementing the study programmes' goal, tasks and results.
- 3) The programme prepares students well to successfully pass the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer.

#### Weaknesses:

- 1) It is not always possible for students to choose study courses from part B according to their interests.
- 2) Lack of teaching staff's realistically planned and transparently provided workload of students within many of the study courses that does not match the course's ECTS.
- 3) Relatively high drop-out rates, particularly due to the challenges of balancing academic and professional commitments.
- 4) Limited proactive measures to support students in preparing for the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer.

## Evaluation of the study programme "Law"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### 2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Law"

#### Short-term recommendations

- 1) Reduce the minimum number of students for opening groups of optional study courses, so that all students can truly choose to study the courses that interest them.
- 2) All programmes' study course descriptions should be systematically reviewed with regards the scope of the obligatory course readings, which need to be realistically planned and transparently announced (by indicating specific chapters or page numbers) in order to match the students' envisaged workload and thus the courses' ECTS allocation.
- 3) Develop post-exam support initiatives for students who fail the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer.
- 4) Implement a proactive student advisory system to identify and address challenges early, providing personalized academic and career guidance throughout the programme.
- 5) Establish comprehensive preparation sessions for the Uniform State Professional Qualification Examination for Lawyers, including mock exams, targeted review materials, and mentoring by experienced legal professionals.

#### Long-term recommendations

## II - "Law" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Law" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

2.1.1. As shown in the SAR (p. 153), the Academic Doctoral (Third-cycle) Study Programme "Law" 51380 (DSP Law) demonstrates strong compliance with the study field "Law" (study field). DSP Law aligns with the national and international frameworks for higher education, adhering to regulations such as the Latvian Science Clusters and Subfields as defined by Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 595. The DSP Law title accurately reflects its content, which focuses on in-depth legal studies and research in law subfields like state law, civil law, criminal law, and international law. The DSP Law objectives and outcomes are clearly linked to the overarching goal of preparing highly qualified legal scholars for academia, public and private sector roles, and complex legal practice.

The alignment of the DSP Law with the study field is reinforced by its comprehensive curriculum, which includes coursework, research activities, and doctoral thesis development. It reflects the need for legal expertise in both national and international contexts, ensuring graduates possess advanced knowledge, research skills, and the ability to contribute to the evolving field of law.

2.1.2. As demonstrated in the SAR (p. 153), the DSP Law is appropriately titled and coded to reflect

its advanced academic level and focus. The degree awarded—Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Social Sciences—aligns with the Latvian Qualifications Framework at level 8 and complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 595 “Regulations on Latvian scientific branch groups, scientific branches and sub-branches”. This degree confirms the DSP Law emphasis on cultivating advanced research skills and academic expertise in law science.

Since the previous accreditation, the degree to be awarded is changed - the degree of Doctor of Science (philosophiae doctor, abbreviated - Ph. D.) in social sciences is awarded (SAR, p. 152). The new degree is also indicated in the sample diploma - graduates of the DSP Law are awarded Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Social Sciences (Annex 15\_6 "DIPLOMA\_doktors\_Eng\_2024.docx").

However, the parameters of the DSP Law state that after full-time studies graduates are awarded "Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Law", while after part-time studies - Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Social Sciences. These parameters should be equalized.

The DSP Law aims and objectives are clearly linked to its learning outcomes, which focus on developing high-level legal scholars capable of contributing to academia, the legal profession, and public service. The curriculum is structured to support these objectives, offering a combination of coursework, research activities, and thesis development tailored to the needs of doctoral candidates. Admission requirements are consistent with the DSP Law advanced nature, requiring a Master's degree in law and a demonstrated capacity for independent research, assessed through an entrance interview.

The duration and scope of the programme are carefully designed to provide sufficient time for in-depth research and study, with full-time studies lasting three years and part-time studies extending to four years. This flexibility accommodates the varying professional and personal commitments of doctoral students (SAR, p. 154-155).

The implementation language, primarily Latvian, is justified by the national context of the programme, although provisions for international collaboration and the inclusion of global perspectives further enhance its academic robustness. This interconnected structure ensures the programme delivers high-quality legal education and research opportunities aligned with its stated goals.

2.1.3. As described in the SAR (p. 153), the DSP Law has undergone limited but significant adjustments to align with evolving academic and regulatory requirements. One of the notable changes is the transition to the ECTS, in compliance with the amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the UL's internal orders. This adjustment has standardized the programme's workload, with 1 ECTS credit corresponding to 25-27 hours of study, including contact hours, ensuring consistency with European academic practices.

The DSP Law parameters, including its duration, scope, and learning outcomes, have been preserved, emphasizing its focus on high-level legal scholarship and research. The learning outcomes were streamlined during the review process to ensure clarity, reduce redundancy, and focus on key competencies, such as independent research, critical analysis, and advanced legal knowledge. These changes enhance the programme's coherence without altering its overall structure or objectives.

No substantive modifications were made to the DSP Law aims or objectives, as these remain aligned with the national academic and labour market needs. However, the degree awarded was updated to

Doctor of Science (PhD) in Social Sciences, reflecting compliance with the revised regulatory framework. These adjustments, while maintaining the integrity of the programme, demonstrate responsiveness to external academic standards and regulatory changes, ensuring its continued relevance and high quality.

2.1.4. As demonstrated in the SAR (p. 155), the DSP Law demonstrates significant economic and social relevance, addressing the need for highly qualified legal scholars in academia, public administration, and private practice. The DSP Law is critical for developing experts capable of addressing complex legal challenges and contributing to the evolving landscape of law and governance. Graduates are in demand for roles in academia, research, the judiciary, and other high-level positions, ensuring their contribution to the socio-economic development of Latvia and beyond.

The number of enrolled students has shown variability, with 14 students enrolled in the 2020/2021 academic year, 12 in 2021/2022, and 11 in 2022/2023 (SAR, p. 155). This decline can be attributed to external factors such as the introduction of the National Unified Examination for Lawyers, which impacted the timeline for potential applicants transitioning from professional qualifications to doctoral studies. Despite these challenges, the programme has maintained a steady pool of enrolled students. Private funding has played a significant role in sustaining enrollment, complementing state-funded positions.

Employment indicators for graduates remain robust, with approximately 90% securing relevant positions within six months of graduation (SAR, p. 155). Alumni occupy prestigious roles, including positions in the judiciary (e.g., Constitutional Court judges), academia, and the legal profession. These outcomes underscore the programme's success in preparing graduates for leadership roles in various sectors.

However, challenges such as high attrition rates during the programme persist. Time constraints, personal reasons, and difficulties in completing doctoral theses are the primary causes of dropouts. The attrition rate, which was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, peaked at approximately 25% in 2020 but has shown signs of improvement post-pandemic. Enhanced academic and institutional support, particularly for thesis completion, could further mitigate this issue and improve retention rates.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The DSP Law demonstrates a strong alignment with the academic, legal, and societal needs of Latvia, preparing highly qualified legal scholars for roles in academia, judiciary, and private sectors. The programme's robust curriculum and its adaptability through full-time and part-time modes ensure accessibility and relevance. Despite the DSP Law strengths, including high employability of graduates and contributions to prestigious roles, challenges remain. High attrition rates, largely impacted by the pandemic, and limited flexibility in admission processes highlight areas for improvement. Strengthening mechanisms to address these issues will further enhance the programme's effectiveness and sustainability.

Strengths:

- 1) Strong alignment with the economic and social needs for highly qualified legal scholars, contributing to academia, judiciary, and the private sector.
- 2) High employability of graduates in prestigious roles such as Constitutional Court judges and academic leaders, reflecting the programme's quality.
- 3) Balanced implementation with full-time and part-time options, accommodating diverse student needs and promoting accessibility.

Weaknesses:

- 1) High attrition rates, particularly during the pandemic, highlight challenges in meeting programme requirements and completing doctoral theses.
- 2) Limited flexibility in admission deadlines, especially for applicants transitioning from the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer.
- 3) Insufficient mechanisms to track and address barriers impacting doctoral thesis completion and student retention.
- 4) The programme is implemented only in Latvian. This prevents the admission of students from foreign countries into the programme, which limits the internationalization of the programme.
- 5) The degree to be awarded must be specified in the parameters of the DSP Law.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The content of the DSP Law corresponds to the objectives of the programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes. The relevance of the study course content to the trends of the industry, labour market and scientific development is monitored by the teaching staff responsible for the course, as well as by the study programme director. Courses requiring theoretical examinations focus on the most recent scientific findings and trends, while courses related to the development of a thesis already require the study and approbation of the most recent findings as stated in the course descriptions. The study programme includes courses that ensure the transferability of research results to higher education or the practical application of law.

Whereas the "practice" in preparing research-based opinions can be chosen as an elective course Preparing a research/review, which can take the form of preparation of a practically applicable opinion on an issue of practical relevance, preparation of an opinion on a draft law, summary of case-law, etc. Theoretical knowledge can also be put into practice in the course Participation in the execution of a research project. This provides doctoral students with full opportunities to apply their knowledge and research results in practical research and university pedagogy, thus achieving the programme's outcomes and aim (SAR, p.159).

The DSP Law meets the requirements of the Law on Scientific Activity and the Procedures and Criteria for the Conferral of a Doctoral Degree in Science (Promotion).

The relevance of the study course content to the trends of the industry, labour market and scientific development is monitored by the teaching staff responsible for the course, as well as by the study programme director.

Courses requiring theoretical examinations focus on the most recent scientific findings and trends, while courses related to the development of a thesis already require the study and approbation of the most recent findings as stated in the course descriptions. The DSP Law includes courses that ensure the transferability of research results to higher education or the practical application of law (SAR, p. 157). For example, the doctoral student's "practice" in the field of higher education is ensured by the study courses Participation in study and study methodological work I and II in Part A, as well as the opportunity to choose the study courses Development of a study course or Participation in the implementation of a study course in Part B. Whereas the "practice" in preparing research-based opinions can be chosen as an elective course Preparing a research/review, which can take the form of preparation of a practically applicable opinion on an issue of practical relevance, preparation of an opinion on a draft law, summary of case-law, etc. Theoretical knowledge can also be put into practice in the course Participation in the execution of a research project (Annex 21.6 " Doctoral study program „LAW” study plan”).

The DSP Law is implemented only in Latvian. This prevents the admission of students from foreign countries into the programme, which limits the internationalization of the programme.

The DSP Law does not include internships in their traditional sense, i.e. the acquisition of practical skills outside an educational establishment. However, there is an activity equivalent to this component, or courses which ensure the transfer of research results to the field of practical application in higher education or law, and which have already been discussed in detail above.

This provides doctoral students with full opportunities to apply their knowledge and research results in practical research and university pedagogy, thus achieving the DSP Law outcomes and aim.

2.2.2. The awarding of a doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the study field Law and its subfields at an advanced level.

The DSP Law covers all areas of research in the Law field - state law, criminal law (including criminology and penitentiary law), civil law, international law, theory and history of law. The programme fosters innovation and creativity in all sub-fields of law. The DSP Law also has implications for other levels of education. Students participate in the implementation of the bachelor and master programmes in law by giving lectures, conducting seminars and supervising the elaboration of bachelor's theses, reviewing bachelor's and master's theses, etc.

In defending the doctoral thesis, the doctoral graduate demonstrates profound knowledge of the scientifically substantiated research topic, scientific research methods applicable in law science, skills to identify problems in law science and provide reasoned solutions, systematically analyse the regularities of theory and legal practice, applying previously acquired theoretical knowledge and being aware of contemporary issues in the aspect of the concept under study, to explain and discuss argumentatively complex and/or systemic aspects of legal science, demonstrating high competence in discussions with experienced legal experts, demonstrating in the presence of these experts the ability to reasonably justify their conclusions and proposals for improving the legal framework or legal culture.

The scientific quality of the programme implementers is also evidenced by the fact that the UL FL

journal "Juridiskā zinātne" has been included in the SCOPUS database in October 2023 (SAR, p. 168).

2.2.3. As demonstrated in chapter 3.2.3 of the SAR, the student-centred approach is observed in updating the DSP Law and the respective study courses, paying special attention to meaningful formulation of learning outcomes, thus promoting the dialogue between teaching staff and students on the content of studies, forms and methods of organization. Well-formulated learning outcomes, on the other hand, promote students' understanding and co-responsibility for their own learning, self-evaluation, and understanding of the assessment they receive. In the study process, lecturers use methods, forms of assessment and evaluation criteria that are consistent with the study aim and the planned learning outcomes. Students receive support and feedback from the teaching staff during the study process. Assessment criteria for marking are made public in advance. Assessment gives students the opportunity to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the planned learning outcomes (SAR, p. 162).

Oral, written and combined methods of study delivery and assessment are used during the study courses and examinations. Various methods for the acquisition and consolidation of knowledge are used in the study process, for example, introductory lectures, interactive lectures, summative consolidation lectures, and problem-oriented lectures. Foreign professors (experts) and professors (experts) from other fields of science are invited to lecture in certain study courses, for example, "Contemporary Application Of European Legal Tradition", in order to promote and improve students' knowledge, skills and competences not only in law, but also in other academic and scientific work in social sciences (especially economics) and humanities (especially history, philosophy and foreign languages). It also provides an understanding of the unity of the social sciences and the humanities. Practical assignments, seminars, individual, pair and group work, discussions and projects are used extensively (SAR, p.162).

Following the principles of student-centred studies, student mobility (recognition of learning outcomes) is promoted, students engage in academic research and social activities initiated by the academic staff, thereby gaining significant experience through testing gained knowledge and skills in practice. By implementing internal quality assurance policies, study programmes are implemented to encourage students to actively participate in the improvement of the study process. Policies and procedures are in place for the submission of student suggestions and complaints and for the handling of student appeals. The results of student surveys are evaluated and taken into account for the improvement of the study process. Students willingly express their suggestions for the improvement of study programmes and the study process in discussions with their teaching staff and programme director (SAR, p.163).

DSP Law is centred on the doctoral student's independent research work, so it can be said to be student-centred. It is thus based on methods that promote individual work, the achievement of results, their clear and comprehensible presentation and dissemination, and their transfer to academic and practical settings. Consequently, the methods used are mostly those that encourage active participation, critical thinking and reflection. Student mobility is encouraged to ensure that research is carried out in an international and/or inter-institutional environment (SAR, p. 164).

Evaluating what was written in the SAR, as well as obtaining information from the study programme lecturers and students during the on-site visit, the experts conclude that study implementation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme and that student-centred learning and teaching principles are considered.

2.2.4. Not applicable

2.2.5. Students have clearly defined promotion (doctoral theses defence) opportunities. The UL FL has a Promotion Council. It operates in compliance with the legislation of the Republic of Latvia and the internal rules and regulations of the UL (SAR, p.165).

The publication of the research results in at least two peer-reviewed publications and the presentation of the research results in at least two international scientific conferences ensure the validation of the research results.

The requirement for validation not only ensures that the research is made public, but also demonstrates the quality of the research output.

The promotion process is separate from the implementation of the programme and takes place in a specifically regulated promotion process (Cabinet Regulations No 1001 of 27 December 2005 "Procedures and Criteria for the Conferral of a Doctoral Degree in Science (Promotion)").

2.2.6. The topics of students' doctoral theses are relevant to the field of law and correspond to the study programme. All the themes chosen reflect the topical issues of the time. None of the themes of the defended theses may be considered outdated (SAR, p. 166). The relevance of the topics to the current developments in the field is also ensured by the topic approval procedure: the topics of the theses in the programme are approved if they cover scientifically topical issues in the relevant field of law. Significant attention is paid to ensuring that the topics are theoretically and practically relevant. It is ensured that the themes do not overlap but complement one another.

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

The DSP Law was created taking into account the interrelationship of study courses, thus allowing the DSP Law to achieve its goal. The content of the study programme is topical, the content of the study courses is interconnected and complementary, meets the goals of the programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes, as well as complies with industry, labour market and scientific trends.

The compliance is monitored by the teaching staff responsible for the course, as well as the director of the study programme. Courses requiring a theory exam focus on the latest scientific knowledge and trends, while dissertation-related courses require research and approbation of the latest knowledge as indicated in the course descriptions.

The DSP Law does not include practice in the traditional sense, which is the acquisition of practical skills outside of an educational institution. However, there is an activity or courses equivalent to this component, which ensures the transfer of research results to the field of practical application. Practical skills in preparing research-based opinions can be chosen as an elective course. This can take the form of preparing a practically applicable opinion on a practically important issue, preparing an opinion on a draft law, case-law analysis, etc. Theoretical knowledge can also be applied in the course Participation in the execution of a research project.

It provides doctoral students with full opportunities to apply their knowledge and research results in practical research and university pedagogy, thus achieving the results and goals of the programme.

The assessment of the DSP Law aim and outcomes shows that the content of the programme, the content of the study courses fully achieves the programme's aim and outcomes, and that the

programme is oriented to the needs of the labour market and scientific trends in the law science field.

The programme meets the requirements of the Law on Scientific Activity and the procedure and criteria for awarding the scientific degree of doctor of Science.

Strengths:

1) The academic staff involved in the implementation of the programme is more qualified than required by law, and 15 of them are experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science in the Law science field.

Weaknesses:

none

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

DSP Law is based on the achievements and findings of the Law field of science.

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

### **Analysis**

2.3.1. All relevant provisions are adequately in place to ensure that a quality study process is feasible. In detail for the resources and provisions of the DSP Law, it again can be referred to SAR, chapters 2.3.1 to 2.3.3, p. 50 ff. For the doctoral studies additionally important for in depth research, are a number of case-law databases, such as the database of the ECHR (European Court of Human Rights) and the CJEU (Court of Justice of the European Union), the database of case-law of the Republic of Latvia, the Latvian Supreme Court Senate case-law database or the Historical case-law database (Latvian language only; years 1918- 1940).

Secondary commenting literature can extensively be found in databases such as VLebooks or the Thomson Westlaw database on different sections of law, including insolvency law and intellectual property law, both on a national and a cross border level.

Scholarly activities of doctoral students are also readily available in the Latvian State Historical Archives and the Latvian State Archives. Researches with the help of those materials are able to show how law has developed in a historical context.

Very specific and not mainstream textbooks and research sources can be made available upon request. Annual editions of topics from international scientific conferences and university legal journals complement the research opportunities.

Doctoral students are expected to teach courses in programmes and take part in international scientific conferences, either organized by the FL or by partner institutions and cooperating

organizations, submitting papers to peer-reviewed journals. A number of articles of doctoral students are for example hosted by the journal of the FL (Journal of the UL).

Per year the DSP Law produces on average 3-4 doctoral theses which are successfully defended. The doctoral programme is highly rated by the alumni, as the surveys show. Support, research possibilities, working atmosphere and the composition of the studies are mentioned positively.

2.3.2. As could be established in the discussions with alumni and students of the DSP Law, doctoral students are encouraged to avail of foreign research opportunities via Erasmus+ programmes, especially designed for mobilities of doctoral students. Naturally, the pandemic has slowed these mobilities down, but research mobilities of researchers, both lecturers and students are picking up again.

Inside Latvia, the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court are also prominent places for scientific research activities. Scholars and doctoral students from abroad take part in the regularly organized scientific conferences of the UL FL. Internationally renowned scholars publish in the respective conference journals. A number of names are given in SAR p.169.

Thus, scholars and doctoral students alike, amongst them the DSP Law students, do participate in the creation of content of databases.

2.3.3. DSP Law is run, using the state budget subsidy from the Ministry of Education and Science and tuition fees. The overall costs are calculated according to the UL methodology and broken down in cost sections (SAR, p. 170 - 172).

Based on the cost structure and the total number of students, namely 30 full-time studies (25 of them budget-funded and 5 tuition fee-based) and 3 part-time intramural studies, a minimum number of 33 students have to avail of the programme to be cost-effective.

It can be concluded that DSP Law is cost-effective in both modes of delivery. Revenue covers expenditure and doesn't require support from other sources.

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

DSP Law is well received and established at the FL. Study provisions, scientific provisions and informative provisions are in place and adequate to secure an excellent opportunity for doctoral study. In the discussions with management and stakeholders it could be established that research conditions and support by teaching staff are highly rated.

Cooperations with prestigious courts and excellent research opportunities guarantee for the necessary scientific research activities, including publications. Several times it was mentioned by students and graduates that international experiences and the contact with scholars from abroad at conferences and seminars were seen as especially motivating experiences. The wish to have more English taught courses was also uttered. The cost structure of the programme allows for financial stability.

Research excellence with all features and cooperations mentioned in the SAR were in high esteem. Internationalization and its possibilities to broaden the horizon and add to the Latvian experience

and research surroundings were named as a to be strengthened part of doctoral studies at the FL.

Strengths:

- 1) Excellent research environment and research conditions.
- 2) Very good research provisions.
- 3) Very approachable and dedicated lecturers.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Mobilities and internationalization need a distinctive boost.

### **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Assessment is based on analysis of SAR materials, p.50 ff.,167 ff. and discussions at assessment visit.

DSP "Law" allows for research intensive doctoral studies with an integrated publication part. The programme is financially stable.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. The UL FL teaching staff involved in the implementation of the DSP Law complies with requirements and regulatory enactments, as is explained in full detail in the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.) and documented throughout the relevant annexes (for discrepancies in the provided data and documentation please see chapter 1.4.). Table 8.4.2.1. in the SAR shows that the majority of the teaching staff holds the highest academic positions (professor and associate professor), which due to the strict election procedure at the UL and the highly competitive election criteria ensures a high standard of the implementation of the study process. There is also a high share of involvement of associate professors in the study programme implementation throughout the past few academic years. All the teaching staff hold a doctoral degree. 25 teaching staff will be involved in the provision of all the DSP's study courses (please see chapter 2.4.4. with regards to some minor discrepancies regarding the DSP's teaching staff).

It needs to be stressed that there is generally a high positive assessment of the teaching staff's qualifications and competences (survey results), which are also strongly valued by students of all UL FL programmes (based on the feedback received during the assessment visit), especially with regards to their leading positions in the most prominent judicial and governmental institutions of Latvia (judges, sworn advocates and other practitioners). Most of the teaching staff thus holds the

highest academic positions, which is of primary importance when it comes to successfully implementing a doctoral study program. Thus, according to the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.) out of the 25 teaching staff involved in the implementation of the DSP, 15 have expert rights of the Latvian Council of Science (for the academic year 2019-2023, the average number of faculty members involved in the implementation of the DSP was 22, including 11 professors, 6 associate professors and 5 assistant professors).

2.4.2. According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.2. and table 8.4.2.1.) neither the number nor the composition of the teaching staff have changed significantly between 2019/2020 and 2023/2024, so there has been no major impact with regards to the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments. The composition of the teaching staff is rather stable overall as well as in the main 3 categories of the teaching staff (professors, associate professors, assistant professors).

2.4.3. With regards to the assessment of whether the scientific publications and the involvement in research-related projects of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study program contribute to the implementation of a high-quality doctoral study programme, it needs to be stressed that the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.) specifies that the DSP is currently being implemented by 25 teaching staff, further specifying that 11 of them are professors, 7 are associate professors and 7 are assistant professors (academic year 2024/2025). In order to assess the said 25 teaching staff's publications, Annex 21.6. was used in order to determine which teaching staff (out of Annex 6 and Annex 9) needs to be analysed with regards to the DSP. When however selecting from Annex 6 and Annex 9 the relevant publication data using the information about the teaching staff from column "Name, surname of course implementer(s)" (Annex 21.6.), and without counting the additional teaching staff listed at the bottom of the table (after the "\*" at the bottom of the table in Annex 21.6.) then the total count (based on Annex 21.6.) is not 25, but 27 teaching staff. The data analysis of the scientific publications of teaching staff implementing the DSP, listed by highest count of publications in Scopus/WoS for the 5-year reporting period used in Annex 8 (for 26 out of 27 teaching staff listed in column "Name, surname of course implementer(s)" in Annex 21.6. for whom a publication list was available in Annex 9) is shown in Figure 4 in the Annex "Annex with data graphs and tables".

Out of all the publications of the DSP teaching staff over the 5-year period, most are categorised as international scientific publications, whereby as much as 40% are indexed in Scopus/WoS or in ERIH+/EBSCO and 21% are international scientific publications not indexed in databases (see Figure 4 in the Annex "Annex with data graphs and tables"). The remaining 39% of publications are categorised as national scientific publications. Clearly, the DSP teaching staff on an aggregate level has a very international scientific publication profile (61%), with a high share of publications that are indexed in Scopus/WoS or in ERIH+/EBSCO (40%) as well as a strong national scientific publication profile (39%). The analysed data shows an average of 5 scientific articles published in Scopus, WoS and ERIH+ per each teaching staff during the 5-year period (see Figure 4 in the Annex "Annex with data graphs and tables"). There is however a very diverse distribution of publishing frequency as well as type of publication, highlighting that there are highly productive as well as rather low productive teaching staff, whereas the latter is the exception. Overall, the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the DSP displays a strong scientific publishing profile which is both internationally as well as nationally visible and thus certainly adds to the high quality of the DSP. Each member of the teaching staff (as identified according to the methodology presented in chapter 2.4.3. above, for 1 staff no publication list was made available) has in the last 6 years published in peer-reviewed editions, including international editions or demonstrates five years of practical experience (according to data provided in Annex 7) in accordance with the Law on Higher Education

Institutions.

2.4.4. The lecturers involved in the DSP Law have a rich volume of publications (Annex 9 "Publications of the academic staff"). Almost all lecturers have international publications indexed in databases Scopus and/or Web of Science. Those few lecturers who have only national publications have considerable seniority in the work environment related to the taught course of study.

According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.4.), several of the DSP Law teaching staff have been involved in scientific projects as project managers or prime contractors/ subproject managers/ leading researchers. For instance, applied research project "Strengthening Consumer Protection in the Digital and Data Age: Implementation of the New Consumer Purchase Directives in the Latvian Legal System, "CALDER: Capacity building and awareness rising to prevent and counter intolerance in Latvia" (funded by European Commission JUSTICE PROGRAMME & RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND CITIZENSHIP PROGRAMME) were led by associate professors in the UL FL. The teaching staff members of the programme were principal investigators in such projects like "New Solutions in the Study of Demographic and Migration Processes for the Development of Latvian and European Knowledge Society" (National Research Programme "Letonica for the Development of Latvian and European Society", project), "Vectors of Societal Cohesion: from Cohesion around the Nation-State (2012-2018) to a Cohesive Civic Community for the Security of the State, Society and Individuals" (National Research Programme), COST Action No. CA-19143 "European Digital Human Rights Network", "Socialist interpretations of legal history. The histories and historians of law and justice in the GDR, Poland and the Baltic states under the reign of communism", "Romanistische Methode im Ostmitteleuropa - Methodische Herausforderungen der europäischen Romanistik im Kontext der neuen politischen Ordnung nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg", "Justice for Development" (No. 3 .4.1.0/16/I/001) within the framework of the study "The Impact of the Principle of Compulsory Criminal Procedure on the Efficiency of Criminal Procedure".

Notwithstanding the strict criteria the SAR refers to with regards the exclusion rules from the evaluation, the overall share of less than 30% of the DSP teaching staff involved in scientific projects as project managers or prime contractors/ subproject managers/ leading researchers (taking the total of 25 teaching staff the SAR states), is indeed rather low, but still satisfactory.

The assessment visit did however show that doctoral students are not aware of the ongoing research projects and in this regard there seems to be room for improvement in the future.

2.4.5. According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.5.), there are clear mechanisms foreseen for ensuring mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, both on the level of the study programme as well as on the level of specific study courses. Each study course has a responsible teaching staff member who ensures that the organisational requirements (timetables, e-learning materials, grades) are met. Duplication of study course content is not possible, given the specific nature of the study courses included in the DSP Law. At the beginning of each academic year, the study programme director and the dean inform the staff involved in the study programme at a staff meeting about the number of students enrolled, their previous education, as well as remind them of the principles common to the implementation of the study programme in the choice of teaching methods.

The current student-staff ratio is 2 (25 teaching staff for 50 students, or 2 students per one teaching staff member), whereby a large part of the study courses are taught under the direct supervision of the thesis supervisor.

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

The teaching staff clearly qualified with a high share of teaching staff elected to the highest academic position of Professor at the UL FL, whereby all the teaching staff holds a doctoral degree. The teaching staff's profiles (Annex 7) show that these are leading experts and scholars in all subfields of law and its practice which is of particular importance for the DSP Law goal, its tasks and results. The qualifications of the teaching staff are compliant with the relevant provisions, especially with regards to (international and national) scientific publications, as well as scientific project implementation. The only reservation in this regard relates to the discrepancies about the teaching staff provided in Annex 21.6. and the count of 25 teaching staff in the SAR. The teaching staff represents Latvia's leading law scholars and professionals in the highest elected academic positions. There are clear mechanisms foreseen for ensuring mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, both on the level of the study programme as well as on the level of specific study courses (especially when several teaching staff are implementing a course jointly).

Strengths:

- 1) Highly qualified teaching staff with strong professional and academic experience and competences necessary for successfully implementing the study programmes' goal, tasks and results.
- 2) High appeal of the study programme due to the heavy involvement of leading legal experts and scholars holding top-positions in judiciary and advocacy and government.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Low number of teaching staff involved in scientific projects as project managers or prime contractors/ subproject managers/ leading researchers.

## Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The assessment is based on the analysis as provided for criteria 2.4.1.-2.4.5. and based on the data provided in the relevant annexes as cited in section 2.4.1.-2.4.5. while strongly relying on the findings of the assessment visit. Almost all lecturers have international publications indexed in databases Scopus and/or Web of Science. Those few lecturers who have only national publications have considerable seniority in the work environment related to the taught course of study, out of the 25 teaching staff involved in the implementation of the DSP Law, 15 have expert rights of the Latvian Council of Science.

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided course descriptions in Annex "22\_6 Descriptions study courses DoctSP Law 2024.docx" are available in both Latvian and English languages, although the programme is implemented only in Latvian.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The diploma example available in annex "15\_6\_DIPLOMA\_doktors\_Eng\_2024.docx" is compliant with the Cabinet of Ministers 16.04.2013 Regulation No. 202 "Procedures by which documents certifying higher education recognised by the State shall be issued".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached Annex "24.04.2024 - 20-13\_43 - Declaration - requirements in Section 55. 3 of on.edoc" (Head of study field Declaration) affirms that programme complies with the regulations of the Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

The Law on Higher Education Institutions states that not less than five professors and associate professors altogether who are elected in the UL shall take part in the implementation of the compulsory part and the limited elective part of academic study programme. According to the provided Annex "6 Teaching staff 2024.xlsx", a total of 12 professors and 10 associate professors who are elected in the UL takes part in the implementation of the study field "Law".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex JF\_24.04.2024\_Declaration - doctoral study program academic staff.docx confirms that at least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of the study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science.

According to the Head of study field Declaration - fifteen teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of the study programme, all of them are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the field of Law science.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "24.04.2024 - 20-13\_46 - Declaration - Latvian language of the academic.edoc.pdf" affirms that the knowledge of Latvian language of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 08.03.2022 Regulation No. 157 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "Examples of agreement.zip" containing study agreements fully complies with the Cabinet of Ministers 23.01.2007 Regulation No. 70 "Rules to be included in the study agreement".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided information in Annex "DECLARATION.ZIP" (Agreement between UL and Riga Stradiņš University (RSU)) affirms that students are provided with opportunities to continue their education in the RSU in the doctoral study program in Law (51380) of the study field Law, if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "Refund and Compensation Policy\_\_EN.docx" states that the UL shall guarantee compensation for students if study programme is not accredited due to the action (activity or failure to act) of the UL or the licence of the study programme is revoked and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Provided Annex "19 Compliance with the specific regulatory framework DSP Law.docx" affirms, that programme corresponds to the normative regulation, in case of doctoral study programme - Law on Scientific Activity and Cabinet regulations "Procedures and Criteria for the Conferral of a Doctoral Degree in Science (Promotion)".

### **Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

DSP Law meets all the formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions, in the Law on Scientific Activities and Cabinet of Ministers regulations, issued in accordance with the law.

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

DSP Law meets all the formal requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions, in the Law on Scientific Activities and Cabinet of Ministers regulations "Procedures and Criteria for the Conferral of a Doctoral Degree in Science (Promotion)".

Since the previous accreditation, the degree to be awarded is changed - the degree of Doctor of Science (Ph. D.) in social sciences is awarded.

The academic staff involved in the implementation of the programme is highly qualified. Most of them are experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science in the Law science field.

Every year, the doctoral thesis is defended by graduates of the programme who are well-known law scholars. They are often already known among the law specialists even before defending the thesis. The lecturers of the programme meet the specific requirements of Latvia to have citations from articles in court judgments.

The DSP Law is implemented only in Latvian. This prevents the admission of students from foreign countries into the programme, which limits the internationalization of the programme.

DSP Law implementation is possible in all declared implementation options - full time studies and part time studies in Latvian.

Overall, the DSP Law showcases significant strengths and demonstrates a high level of quality, warranting a very positive evaluation. However, due to the absence of a formal option to rate it as 'very good,' and in light of the identified weaknesses that affect certain aspects of its implementation, the DSP Law cannot be deemed flawless. Taking these factors into account, the expert group recommends assessing the programme as 'good' while recognizing its potential for further improvement to achieve an even higher evaluation in the future.

#### Strengths:

- 1) The academic staff involved in the implementation of the programme is more qualified than required by law, and 15 of them are experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science in the Law science field.
- 2) Highly qualified teaching staff with strong professional and academic experience and competences necessary for successfully implementing the study programmes' goal, tasks and results.
- 3) Very good research provisions.
- 4) Strong alignment with the economic and social needs for highly qualified legal scholars, contributing to academia, judiciary, and the private sector.
- 5) High employability of graduates in prestigious roles such as Constitutional Court judges and academic leaders, reflecting the programme's quality.
- 6) Balanced implementation with full-time and part-time options, accommodating diverse student needs and promoting accessibility.

#### Weaknesses:

- 1) High attrition rates, particularly during the pandemic, highlight challenges in meeting programme requirements and completing doctoral theses, insufficient mechanisms to track and address barriers impacting doctoral thesis completion and student retention.
- 2) Limited flexibility in admission deadlines, especially for applicants transitioning from the Uniform state professional qualification examination of a lawyer.
- 3) Low number of teaching staff involved in scientific projects as project managers or prime contractors/ subproject managers/ leading researchers.
- 4) Mobilities and internationalization need a distinctive boost.

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

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Law"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

- 1) Decisive and coordinated measures to step up mobilities and internationalization are necessary.
- 2) Make information about ongoing scientific/applied research projects more available to students enrolled in the doctoral study programme.
- 3) Establish regular progress monitoring and targeted support services, including academic, financial, and mental health resources, to ensure timely completion and retention.
- 4) Establish flexible admission deadlines or rolling admissions to accommodate applicants transitioning from the Uniform State Professional Qualification Examination of a Lawyer.
- 5) Develop and implement a robust system for tracking student progress, identifying barriers to thesis completion, and providing targeted interventions to address these challenges.

### **Long-term recommendations**

- 1) Increase the number (at least double) of teaching staff involved in scientific projects as project managers or prime contractors/ subproject managers/ leading researchers.
- 2) Consider the possibility of starting the implementation of the study programme in English, thus increasing the internationalization of the study programme.

## **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
<p>R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:</p>		<p>Partially compliant</p>	<p>The assessment is based on the analysis provided for criteria 1.2.1–1.2.6, which indicate that UL FL has established a robust and systematic quality assurance system that aligns with institutional goals and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. Key strengths include the comprehensive mechanisms for collecting and analyzing stakeholder feedback, such as student surveys and employer consultations, and the regular use of this data to inform programme adjustments and strategic decisions. The effective integration of feedback processes and the accessibility of survey results to relevant stakeholders further demonstrate the faculty’s commitment to transparency and continuous improvement. Insights from the assessment visit confirmed these strengths, highlighting UL FL’s proactive approach to maintaining and enhancing quality in the study field. Based on these considerations, the assessment concludes that the criteria are fully compliant, however key data and documents necessary for an evidence-based assessment of the fulfillment of a number of the analyzed criteria by the UL FL display significant discrepancies.</p>
<p>R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)</p>	<p>Fully compliant</p>		<p>The assessment is based on the analysis as provided for criterias 1.4.1.-1.4.6. and in view of the significant discrepancies in the data and documentation provided is mainly based on the assessment visit, while taking into account the leading role of the UL FL in scientific/applied research on the national level.</p>

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.		Partially compliant	Assessment is based on analysis of SAR materials, p. 78 ff. and discussions at assessment visit. The UL FL has many cooperations with prestigious institutions nationally and abroad. However, mobilities of staff and students remain on a scarce level and lack of coordinated approach and strategy towards internationalization is detected.
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.		Partially compliant	The UL should continue work on implementation of recommendations, in particular those related to international cooperation, promotion of research and provision of academic staff.

#### 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	Pre-trial Investigation (42380)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
2	Law (43380)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
3	Law and Governance of Institutions (45380)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
4	Pre-trial Investigation (47380)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

<b>No.</b>	<b>Study programme</b>	<b>R5</b>	<b>R6</b>	<b>R7</b>	<b>R8</b>	<b>Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)</b>
5	Law (47380)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
6	Law (51380)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

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

none