

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies

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

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

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The study field “Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation” (study field) is one of the priority study fields in the field of social sciences at Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LBTU). The Faculty of Agriculture and Food Technology (LPTF) is responsible for the implementation of this study field at LBTU. The study field includes professional bachelor study programme “Restaurant and Hotel Management” (study programme). The last accreditation of this study field took place in 2013 and resulted with the six year accreditation term.

Study field exhibits several commendable strengths across various facets of its operations. In conclusion, the study programme has several notable strengths. It adopts a unique approach by integrating detailed food services and production into restaurant and hotel management studies, which adds significant value and distinguishes it from other programmes. Students express high satisfaction with the programme content and appreciate the financial and career development support. The programme benefits from close collaboration with industry professionals who review bachelor papers and contribute to discussions on programme improvements. Additionally, a robust motivation system is in place to encourage and support teacher development and activity. The academic staff is highly dedicated to research and teaching, and they are motivated to involve students in acquiring better skills and knowledge. All stakeholders, including students, recognise and appreciate their competence in their field.

However, some areas should be enhanced. The uniqueness of the study programme, while evident in its approach, needs to be clearly reflected in its title, aim, and learning outcomes. The current structure of the study programme, though functional, could benefit from a more systematic approach, with courses being more coherently linked into content-rich modules. LBTU also needs to establish a more transparent system for submitting complaints and suggestions, and ensure that students receive feedback on their recommendations. Additionally, the study field needs to understand better how the study field and program-level outcomes contribute towards the faculty and university-level KPIs and their achievement.

The LBTU quality management system primarily operates at the university administration level, with insufficient focus on the study field and programme levels. There is a need for clear procedures and guidelines to regulate changes to the study programme, including changes to individual syllabi, which should be accessible to every teacher through the LBTU IT system. Furthermore, students are not involved in the acceptance of the study programme. There is also a need for more transparency regarding the budget at the faculty and study field levels. The study programme name and provided qualifications are too broad and need to align better with each other.

The expert team proposes a series of confident and transparent steps to address these areas for improvement, including encouraging the publication of scientific and professional papers exclusively in the field of study, thereby enhancing the programme's academic standing. Additionally, more applied research opportunities and increased possibilities for students to engage in research activities and collaborate with the industry are necessary - a move that will undoubtedly enrich their learning experience. This study field and study programme can further enhance its distinctiveness, coherence, and relevance by addressing these weaknesses head-on, ultimately providing students with a more robust and integrated educational experience.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1.

The aim of the study field is to provide high-quality studies that ensure the training of internationally competitive specialists for the hospitality sector of the tourism industry (SAR, p. 14) and this contributes to the vision of the LBTU to be a modern, nationally and internationally recognized science university - a leader in the innovations of bioeconomy and related industries and the sustainability of natural resources (SAR, p.4) as well shows how the study field can support the mission of the LBTU - the creation of an internationally competitive, innovative, creative and sustainable future for the development of society (SAR, p. 4).

In this study field only one study programme is implemented: Restaurant and Hotel Management in the 6th level of EQF (European Qualifications Framework), professional bachelor programme, which is clearly connected with the study field. Despite the some drawbacks for the tourism and hospitality sector during the pandemic and due to the war and economic recession, the latest sectoral analysis and employers feedback refers to the recovery of the sector and confirms constant, existing and future needs for the competent labour. At the same time the LBTU should continue regular market analysis to predict market behaviour and catch the trends to update the study content and targets (eg. number of students, study forms etc).

LBTU's long-term goals refers to the excellence in research, high-quality studies and effective university management. The same intentions reflect in this study field where the study processes are developed to encourage students to participate in research projects and enable academic staff to bring research into the core of their teaching. The knowledge created and provided in the study field helps to educate internationally competitive specialists.

This study field contributes to the achievement of the LBTU's medium term objectives (SAR, p. 4) by integration of the studies and research, but development possibilities are in application of research results in the national economy and in diversified supply of lifelong education.

Although the study field "location" in the academic structure (under the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Technology, Table 1.1. SAR, p. 6) is justified with the "deeper connection" with the food production and maintenance, the title and the aim of the study field refer to the more logical connection with the Faculty of Economics and Social Developments.

In general, the study field contributes to the strategic directions of the LBTU.

1.1.2.

LBTU has formed the SWOT analysis (SAR, p. 16, Table 2.1) based on the stakeholders feedback and surveys and worded the main development priorities and plan for the study field. When the development priorities (SAR, p.16) highlight the need for improvements in study content, environment and infrastructure; opening of the study programme in English; attraction of the foreign teachers and students and closer collaboration with the external partners, then the development plan also refers the need for improving teachers competencies, attract bachelor students to continue with master level courses and offer lifelong learning (LLL) course. Unfortunately, the development plan (Annex 1. Improvement and Development Plan for the Study 2023-2027) is quite a superficial and general highlighting in some cases just general activity (eg. attracting foreign teaching staff, implementing study programme in Latvian and English, signing new Erasmus agreements etc). The activities should be purposeful and targeted (eg. why and what kind of Erasmus agreements are needed and how many of them is necessary/optimal to have etc.) Development plan should indicate the main goal and KPIs (some indications of that are given in the SAR p.18, but for some reason they show just percentage of expected increase/decrease, but no starting level. Eg. increase the number of foreign teaching staff by 50% - the target seems to be ambiguous, but there are only two foreign lecturers right now, which means that the target is to hire one more during two years. Not ambiguous at all and probably won't cover the need for foreign

staff).

Concerning the SWOT (SAR, p. 16-17) analysis, the given strengths and weaknesses reflect quite clearly the employers and students feedback and expert team impressions about the status of the study field. Nevertheless, the opportunities and threats should be based on the external environment situation and trends, less for the internal intentions and re-written weaknesses (eg. weakness: small number of foreign teaching staff - opportunity: attraction of teaching staff from abroad etc).

1.1.3.

According to the structure of the LBTU (1_dala_2_Pielikums_LBTU_management_structure_EN.docx), this study field belongs to the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Technology (LPTF) and is supported by the other structural units as Dean's office, Lifelong Learning Centre and others to implement the studies and extracurricular activities. Most of the supportive processes of the university like finances, marketing, IT are centralised to the university level or faculty level and just the study process itself is mainly left for the study field to be decided, although even then many confirmation processes are necessary to pass to get final acceptance (eg. study programme development, recognition of prior work experience etc) and general study rules should be followed. Due to that some processes take too much time (e.g. recognition of prior experience takes at least 4 months as was mentioned by the students during the onsite interview) and decrease the efficiency.

In the study field level the responsibilities (SAR, p. 19) of the main actors (study programme director, head of the study field) are clear and known for all the partners. The duties of the study programme director are regulated and unified in university by the "Regulations on Study Programme Directors" (Senat decision, LBTU internal document). According to the conducted interviews, the structure of tasks, responsibilities and main processes are clear and followed.

Implementation of responsibilities is supported by the system of regular meetings and with the work of temporary and permanent working groups and committees.

1.1.4.

Every study programme of LBTU has its own student admission regulations, available in Latvian and English (if it is the study language). Regulations are available on the university's admission webpage (english: <https://www.lbtu.lv/en/how-to-apply>). Admission rules are common and do not distinguish between study fields or study programmes, but describe clearly the main requirements and restrictions based on the target groups (eg. winners of olympiads, people who gained their secondary education abroad, people who intend to go to the army etc).

Admission requirements for professional bachelor's study programme "Restaurant and Hotel Management" (<https://www.lbtu.lv/lv/pamatstudijas/edinasanas-un-viesnicu-uznemejdarbiba>) are secondary education, centralised exam in Latvian, foreign language, and mathematics. LBTU has joined the admission system implemented by 12 Latvian higher education institutions, where candidates for undergraduate studies can apply for the chosen HEI and study programme. Students are admitted on a competitive basis based on their results. Admission system is clear and logical.

LBTU also offers possibility to start studies in later study stages, if the potential student has previously acquired knowledge, skills and competencies in formal education or in non-formal education. This procedure is described in Rector's order "On the Procedure for Starting Studies at Later Stages at LBTU (internal document, https://www.lbtu.lv/sites/default/files/2023-06/Study_regulation_2023_EN.pdf) and is applied for the previously exmatriculated students. At the same time the LBTU has adopted the system of recognition of prior learning, which is built up according to the "Regulations on Recognition of Knowledge, Skills and Competences Acquired Outside Formal Education or Acquired through Professional Experience" (internal document). It is unclear why those two procedures are separated, although the difference is only in the amount of recognised prior competences (in ECTS) and in recognition procedure, but the content and goal of the procedures is the same (give assessment to students previous knowledge).

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) procedure is understandable, but whether every application

of recognition of prior experience is handled separately by the Lifelong Education Centre then it takes a really long time (based on the aforementioned document, up to 4 months). This can be the reason why the students do not want to use this possibility (just one application within 6 years in this study field, SAR, p. 21). RPL must follow the learning- outcome studies principles. Unfortunately, the criteria in the regulation (“Regulations on Recognition of Knowledge, Skills and Competences Acquired Outside Formal Education or Acquired through Professional Experience” (internal document, point 3.3)) describe that study results can be recognized by the commission if the formal criteria (3.3.1. the documents submitted by the person contain clear, unambiguous and complete information about the acquired or acquired knowledge, skills and competences; 3.3.2. if it is possible to assign at least one credit point for the recognized learned or acquired knowledge, skills and competences; 3.3.3. the person's previously acquired education meets the admission requirements in the relevant study program; 3.3.4. the person has successfully passed the additional test appointed by the commission) are met, but based on the provided information in the aforementioned regulation the comparison between the acquired learning outcomes and necessary (study programme or subject) learning outcomes is not done.

According to the regulation “Regulations on Recognition of Knowledge, Skills and Competences Acquired Outside Formal Education or Acquired through Professional Experience” (internal document)), in case of ambiguities, consultations for filling out the application are provided by Lifelong Education Center, but who can or should advise the student in the case of study field connected questions, is not clear.

1.1.5.

The general rules and principles for the student assessment are given in the Study Regulations (internal document https://www.lbtu.lv/sites/default/files/2023-06/Study_regulation_2023_EN.pdf and SAR, p. 22). Students assessment is described as summative, but includes some aspects of formative assessment (eg. interim tests and feedback for the students about improvements possibilities to get better level learning outcomes at the end of the course) as well. Although formative assessment is not mentioned in the Study Regulations document, the teaching staff stated during the assessment visit that they give formative feedback for the students both in the oral and written mode. During the assessment visit the interviewed students confirmed that they can get feedback for their study results and advises for further improvement.

Due to the Study Regulation document and Syllabi, all the courses end with the examination. (Study Regulation p. 4.2.1. Examinations are organised in order to assess the student's study results achieved as a result of individual study tasks, parts of the study course or the study of the entire course and to determine the qualitative evaluation of the study results in a study period (semester, study module, session, study year or study period as a whole).). In case of some shorter study course or with the more qualitative level learning outcomes, the LBTU could think about allowing the final course result to be given as a sum of the home assignments, interim tests etc to decrease the study load for the students and avoid double assessment of the same learning outcomes. As well as not all the courses must be graded (getting mark from 1- 10), but could allow assessing of the achievement of the learning outcome in the minimum level (passed/ not passed).

Study Regulation (internal document) describes comprehensively the student assessment procedure, possible assessment modes, grading system and states the examination and re-examination process, rules and requirements. Study regulation documents could be publicly available on the web-page for the potential students and staff to get more information about what to expect at LBTU.

1.1.6.

The rules and principles governing academic honesty among LBTU members are outlined in the LBTU Regulations on Academic Integrity (internal document, https://www.lbtu.lv/sites/default/files/2023-06/Academic_integrity_regulation_2023_EN.pdf). This document provides essential guidelines for upholding academic honesty in all research and study-

related activities. Specifically, the main sub-documents governing academic honesty requirements in final theses are Violations of Academic Integrity in Final Works / Doctoral Theses and Procedures for Submitting Electronic Copies of Final Works and Their Verification in the Plagiarism Control System.

The consequences of student misconduct during examinations are regulated by the Study Regulation document (internal document), which stipulates that breaches of exam ethics may result in the student's expulsion from the LBTU.

To ensure academic integrity and prevent dishonest behaviour, the LBTU e-learning system has integrated the Turnitin Integrity tool (SAR, p. 23). This tool is used to assess the originality of written works, thereby mitigating plagiarism concerns. Consequently, all final theses undergo scrutiny through this tool, with no instances of plagiarism detected thus far.

Feedback obtained from interviews during assessment visit with academic staff and students indicates a high level of awareness regarding the rules and principles of academic integrity. Students affirm that the importance of adhering to academic honesty is emphasised from the outset of their studies, with teachers consistently reinforcing this throughout their academic journey.

However, student feedback also highlights the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in preparing assignments. While students assert that they only seek AI assistance during the ideation phase and not for the completion of entire assignments, concerns arise regarding the regulation of AI usage in student works. According to students, teachers provide conflicting information on the permissible use of AI in their papers.

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

While the study field Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation is managed mainly in the good manner and with strengths such as its unique approach to the food industry, clear admission procedures, and a focus on academic integrity, there are also areas that need improvement. These include better reflecting the study field's uniqueness in its title and objectives, regulating the use of artificial intelligence in student papers, and streamlining the Recognition of Prior Learning process. Addressing these weaknesses will help enhance the field and programme's overall effectiveness and ensure it continues to meet the needs of students and industry standards.

Strengths:

- 1) uniqueness of the chosen specific deeper approach to the food industry.
- 2) students admission procedure is clear and publicly available
- 3) students are aware of academic integrity and follow the rules.
- 4) there is a regulation to continue the studies that were left unfinished

Weaknesses:

- 1) AI use in students papers is not regulated
- 3) RPL procedure is too long and is not carried out based on the learning outcome based assessment

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1.

The LBTU quality management system is part of the overall LBTU Development Strategy and covers a broad spectrum of matters (SAR, p.11). The LBTU Quality Management System and Quality Assurance Plan are not publicly available; these are internal documents. Publicly available is a Quality Assurance Policy (available on: https://www.lbtu.lv/sites/default/files/2023-10/LBTU_Kvalitates_vadibas_politika%20%28nr20%29.pdf)

LBTU has established an internal quality management system based on international standards for excellence (developed by the Investors in Excellence organisation). The first quality certificate LBTU got was in 2016, and since then, the audit has occurred every two years. According to SAR (p.24), the actual quality certificate LBTU has is until December 2024.

According to SAR (p.24), the internal quality assurance system is based on four steps: planning, actions, verification, and improvements. It is a continuous process aimed at improving and developing a study field and study programme.

LBTU Quality Management manual consists of 6 parts: quality management framework, internal quality assurance, external quality assurance, study process, involvement of students and other interested parties, ensuring academic freedom and fairness. The LBTU Quality Management manual gives a general overview of the main directions regarding the quality system and detailed information on the primary documents developed to reach each goal. According to chapter 1.3. of SAR, the quality policy is focused on implementing the LBTU mission and achieving the strategic goals - scientific research, high-quality studies and an effective management system. During the assessment visit, it was not evident that all parties involved understood their roles within the quality management system and mostly recognised their work and activity as a separate necessary process that was done in the best way but not as a part of the quality system.

During the assessment visit, it was emphasised that quality is not a destination, but an ongoing journey to improve the study field and study programme. LBTU, in accordance with the quality system, prepares the self-evaluation report for each study field and study programme. These reports, publicly available on the LBTU website, allow stakeholders to monitor the quality of the study environment and contribute to its improvement. The last self-evaluation report for the professional bachelor study programme "Restaurant and Hotel Management" is about the 2022/2023 academic year (approved at the Meeting of LBTU Senate on 13 December 2023, Minutes No 11-158). According to this self-evaluation report and also the information chapters 2.2.1. and 2.2.2. of SAR, the main changes made in the study programme in the 2022/2023 academic year related to the development of cooperation with foreign education institutions; the improvement of students' foreign languages and use of theoretical knowledge in practice; the development of the policy of the academic staff and their English language; the development cooperation with the industry. Also, the study programme involves industry representatives participating in the review of the bachelor thesis and the defence process after representatives give their feedback and recommendations for improvement. During the assessment visit, the expert team gets evidence that the professional bachelor study programme "Restaurant and Hotel Management" has improved and that students' knowledge has improved. LBTU organises surveys for students after each semester, and as the expert team gets the evidence during the assessment visit, each academic staff discusses the survey results with the programme director and decides which recommendations could be taken into account and make changes or improvements to this study course. Regular surveys are conducted to validate that the quality management system is fully integrated into daily activities and forms an integral part of the everyday work processes. However, the LBTU quality management system operates at the university administration level and may be at the faculty level. Still, it is less so at the study field and the study programme level.

The SAR, p.18., has defined activities to be implemented to prevent and reduce weaknesses (for instance, to increase the number of foreign teaching staff, incoming students, scientific research, and part-time students). However, these KPIs are only partially measurable according to SAR. Page 18 mentions a percentage (for example, increase the number of foreign teaching staff by 50%) that needs to be achieved. Still, the base numbers, such as the initial number of foreign teaching staff, need to be understood. Also, during the assessment visit, the expert team got evidence that KPIs for the professional bachelor study programme "Restaurant and Hotel Management" needed to be clarified to the director of the study programme and academic staff. Again, the gap between the LBTU management, study programme, and academic staff level is shown.

The conclusion could be made that the quality management system is thoroughly developed and implemented at the LBTU management level. The LBTU recognises the significance of formal feedback from students on the LBTU management and study programme level. However, the professional bachelor study programme "Restaurant and Hotel Management" mainly recognises informal feedback from graduates and stakeholders. The continuous improvement of the study programmes has a place in the study field and in the study programme director's activities. However, how the results are effectively disseminated to all parties involved remains unclear. It is important to ensure a clear understanding of how feedback from various sources and stakeholders is consolidated into one comprehensive system, as it forms a vital component of the LBTU commitment to continuous improvement.

1.2.2.

Study programme development and revision processes are regulated according to the "Regulations on study programme development, approval and amendment at LBTU" (approved at the Meeting of LBTU Senate on 11 October 2023, Minutes No 11-133), and the process is also described in SAR sections 1.4. and 2.2.2.: the programme is developed, discussed, and analysed in the Faculty Methodological Committee, the Council, and LBTU Study Council, and all changes are approved by the decision of the Senate, including the approval of the Director of the Study programme.

According to chapter 2.2.2. of SAR, from 2018 to 2021, LBTU implemented ESF project No. 8.2.3.0/18/A/009 "Improvement of LBTU (formerly Latvia University of Agriculture) Management. LBTU annually prepares the self-evaluation report for each study programme and this report is publicly available on the LBTU website. The evaluation is available in Latvian only. The last self-evaluation report for the study programme "Restaurant and Hotel Management" is about the 2022/2023 academic year (approved at the Meeting of LBTU Senate on 13 December 2023, Minutes No 11-158). According to this report and also the information chapters 2.2.1. and 2.2.2. of SAR, we can see the main changes made in the study programme, based on the expert's recommendations (for instance, SAR, section 3.1.1.: improvements in line with the current trends in the field), and changes in the "Law on Higher Education" (for instance, chapter 3.3.1. of SAR: to involve new credit system). One of these changes is related to the qualification to be awarded from "Restaurant and Hotel Manager" to "Tourism and Hospitality Service Manager".

According to chapter 2.2.2. of SAR and LBTU Quality Management Manual (p.59.) feedback is collected regularly from students. LBTU conducts 3 types of surveys: 1) all students at the end of each semester evaluate the study process quality; 2) master-level students and the last course students after final exams evaluate the study programme, quality, resources, infrastructure etc. (clarification during the assessment visit); 3) the 1st-course full-time students once in the 1st semester evaluate the information access about the study opportunities in the LBTU. According to the SAR, LBTU does not conduct graduate surveys.

During the assessment visit, the expert team got evidence that the study programme revision is based on the student's survey results which LBTU conducted each semester. Large discussions about the study programme, the study field and the study programme director are organised at the end of the academic year, where also invited stakeholders. Also, the expert team got evidence that stakeholders gave their review after diploma paper defences and these suggestions study programme director try to take into account and improve the study programme.

It should be noted that more significantly have been reviewed the evaluated study programme and important improvements have been made from the period 2018 and 2021 while LBTU implemented ESF project No. 8.2.3.0/18/A/009 "Improvement of LBTU Management" which are described in chapter 2.2.2. of SAR.

During the assessment visit the expert team gets evidence that students participate in the surveys but do not get the feedback, however, the youngest course students get such proof from the eldest course students when they compare study course tasks, evaluation produce etc. They see these changes. So, this feedback students get only in an informal way, however, it is proof that the study

programme has been revised.

It could be concluded that the study programme undergoes regular reviews based on feedback from students, and stakeholders. However, as mentioned in the previous section, there remains a lack of clarity regarding how all the surveys and feedback collection efforts are integrated into one cohesive system. Additionally, it is unclear how the results of these surveys are disseminated to all relevant parties. The establishment of a more comprehensive feedback dissemination mechanism would contribute to enhancing the transparency and effectiveness of the feedback process

1.2.3.

According to chapter 2.2.3. of SAR, students are provided an opportunity to submit complaints and suggestions about the study process and the content of the study programme in writing or verbally at the faculty or management level. Also, students have the opportunity to use the whistleblowing option on the LBTU portal <https://www.lbtu.lv/lv/trauksmes-celsana> (available in Latvian).

Provided examples (chapter 2.2.3. of SAR) show that students' complaints about the quality of teaching, the content of study courses, or infrastructure and all these complaints have been solved.

During the assessment visit the expert team gets evidence that students know about the system of submitting complaints, suggestions, and appeals. According to chapter 2.2.3. of SAR all information about submitting and reviewing complaints and appeals is available in the Study Regulations. This document is available for all of the students and the expert team to get evidence during the assessment visit that students know about The Study Regulations, know where to find it, and know that there has been described the procedure for submission of the complaints.

Chapter 2.2.3. of SAR, the analytics show that complaints are quite different from dissatisfaction with teaching staff, the content of the study course, and also the room of the study course. Complaints are submitted in an informal (oral), not formal (written) way. On one side it shows the way of fast reactions of the study programme director and proves that the study programme is student-centred, but on the other side, it lacks the use of formal procedures.

The overall impression remains that students are aware of the submission of complaints, however, the expert team did not get the evidence of using this formal system.

1.2.4.

According to chapter 2.2.4. of SAR, LBTU collects different statistical data centrally. Some of the statistical data are collected once during the study year and once a year. All these statistics data are used for preparing different kinds of reports at the LBTU level, faculty, study field or study programme level, and also to submit these data for the Central Statistical Bureau. However, when the statistics are collected and analysed, it is not clear how and what kind of activities are considered to improve the areas which have shown problematic trends in statistics, for instance, student dropout.

Once per month LBTU management and the deans of the faculties receive the statistical data to follow the number of students in the study programme and the use of state - funded study places. During the assessment visit the expert team got evidence that the study programme director took into account the numbers received from LBTU management. However, during the assessment visit, the expert team did not get evidence about the way these data has been analysed at the study programme level.

Also, it was mentioned by the students that they have completed the surveys but they do not know about the results of that survey. In that matter, it could be considered to improve the feedback communication possibilities.

1.2.5.

The information published on LBTU public webpage www.lbtu.lv offers a detailed overview of the evaluated study programme. It is easy to navigate and find the information described in the chapter

2.2.5. of SAR. The published information on the website of the LBTU provides applicants and students with the most important information. The website for information about the study programmes is available in Latvian. The website provides information about the study programmes, including study courses, the main topics included, and terms of admission. Information about the study programmes submitted for accreditation is also available in the public register on www.viis.gov.lv and AIKA e-platform <https://eplatforma.aika.lv/>. The information available on the LBTU website and official public register is the same.

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

LBTU has developed and implemented a quality management system, however, there seems to be a gap between the LBTU university level and study programme and academic staff level. LBTU collected formal feedback from the students, graduates, and stakeholders, however, according to the assessment visit, study programme revisions are based on the student's surveys (which is formal feedback) and employers' informal suggestions. Students are informed about the procedures for submitting complaints and suggestions, however, according to the SAR examples of complaints are submitted informally. Also, the way of feedback for complaints and suggestions is unclear and it is important to ensure a clear understanding of how feedback from various sources and stakeholders is consolidated into one comprehensive system, as it forms a vital component of the LBTU commitment to continuous improvement. The data collected within the surveys and procedures are sufficient for the analysis of the study programme and general satisfaction with the quality and other factors. The LBTU webpage is easy to navigate and provides basic information about the study programme.

Strengths:

- 1) Well-regulated processes and quality management system on the LBTU management level.
- 2) Regular study programme revision.
- 3) Conducted student surveys after each semester and used this information to improve the study programme.

Weaknesses:

- 1) No clear understanding of the study fields and programme level outcomes and how those are or should be linked and contribute to the faculty and university level KPIs and their achievement.
- 2) The LBTU quality management system is a mechanism that operates at the level of the university administration and may be faculty level, but less on the study field and the study programme level.

Assessment of the requirement [1]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

LBTU Quality management manual and LBTU has "Regulations on study programme development, approval and amendment at LBTU" the Senate's decision No. 11-133, October 11, 2023

- 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

LBTU has been developed quality management system and LBTU has external quality certificate

- 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

LBTU has “Regulations on study programme development, approval and amendment at LBTU” the Senate’s decision No. 11-133, October 11, 2023

- 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

“Regulation of studies” Senate 14.06.2023 No. 11- 110

- 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

LBTU has a “Procedure for measuring the efficiency of the scientific performance of LBTU academic staff, leading researchers and researchers” Supplement to the decision of the meeting of LBTU Board of Science of October 26, 2022 No. 22-11

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

LBTU Quality management manual

- 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

LBTU Quality management manual and LBTU has “Regulations on study programme development, approval and amendment at LBTU” the Senate’s decision No. 11-133, October 11, 2023

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1.

Each year, according to SAR (pg.30) LBTU's budget and financial plan, aligned with the Law on the State Budget and Rector's Order, undergo rigorous review and approval. The Finance and Resource Development Council, comprising key stakeholders, assesses both allocations and implementation. Following their review, the plan goes to the Senate and then the LBTU Council for final approval. Independent audit ensures financial accountability, with results reviewed by the Senate before submission to the Council. The LBTU is required to submit quarterly reports to the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Agriculture. The LBTU leadership does not express concern about this method of financing and distributing financial resources, despite the fact that,

indeed, the university components (faculties) do not have direct control over the budget as it is primarily created and then allocated according to the decisions of university bodies. Given that the system of financing and decision-making is extremely centralised, control over the available financial resources for a specific field of study, and consequently for a study programme, is held exclusively by university bodies. What is positive is the fact that the head of a study programme can, upon request, obtain information from the dean and their superiors about the available funds for the field of study. However, it should again be emphasised that this is approximate, as the funds are distributed according to the decisions of the university bodies.

The 2023 financing tripartite agreement outlines that the fundamental cost per study place is 1630.11 EUR, with a study level coefficient of 1.0 or higher for bachelor's programs, and a social security component of 265.50 EUR for bachelor's programmes (SAR, pg. 31). Per Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 994, dated 12.12.2006, universities and colleges are financed from the state budget based on study cost coefficients. For the thematic field of education under "Individual services," the recommended coefficient ranges from 1.1 (minimum) to 1.8 (optimal). Cost per student in 2023 was 2.108,47 Eur and the cost coefficient is 1.13. This is the amount considered as the state contribution for studying. This is the preferred/optimal cost, but it doesn't reflect the actual cost per student. Determining the precise cost of studying is challenging because the implementation of study programmes involves shared infrastructure and administrative tasks, with costs being calculated based on structural units or projects. This has been confirmed by the university after such an inquiry was made by the expert team. When examining state funding over the reporting period (2013 - 2023), it's evident that recent adjustments in both the social security of study places and the study cost coefficients for specific fields of education have led to a slight increase in per-student costs.

LBTU's tuition fees are determined annually by the rector's order. For the academic year 2023/2024, the tuition fee for full-time studies is EUR 1800, and for part-time studies, it is EUR 1400 (SAR, pg.31).

The total amount of funding (amount of state funding plus self-funding from tuition fees) is EUR 219,879 for 119 students. This includes, as specified (according to the written response in e-mail from 03/05/2024 prepared by the LBTU responsible person) : 1) State funding for 92 budget places - 193,979 EUR; 2) Funds paid by natural persons for studies (19 fee-paying students) - 25,900 EUR, by type: Full-time paid studies (3 paid students) - 5,100 EUR and Part-time paid studies (16 paid students) - 20,800 EUR). Accordingly, the average real available funding for one student in the study field is 1.847,72 Eur. This indicates a negative disparity between the estimated cost of studying and the available funding sources that cover the cost of studying. The difference between the estimated cost and the average real available funding per student amounts to 260.75 Eur. The available funds per student cover 87.63% of the estimated total cost of studying per student. However, it is worth noting that the situation is improving because, for example, in 2013, the amount of state participation was only 1,392.16 Euros, which means that by 2023, there was an increase of 51.45%. To cover the study programme costs, 75 students are required, equivalent to 15 groups with a minimum of 6 students per group. This ensures adequate funding for faculty salaries and other expenses. The trend of the number of students in full-time studies during the reporting period indicates a decline in the total number of students (SAR, pg.75-76, Table 3.2). For instance, in the academic year 2012/2013, there were a total of 184 enrolled full-time students, which decreased to 101 in the academic year 2023/2024. Mild fluctuations in the increase or decrease of the number of students are observed over the years, but the trend compared to 2012/2013 is negative. The total number of part-time students also significantly declines during the same period. In the academic year 2012/2013, there were 50 part-time students, whereas in 2023/2024, this number dropped to 10. These dynamics align completely with the overall trend of the total number of students across the LBTU (SAR, pg. 7 - 8), which can be attributed to negative demographic trends regarding natural population increase and migration. The number of students who have dropped out of studies by study years indicates that the majority dropped out due to their own choice, followed by failure to

meet study obligations, financial difficulties, or simply not returning after a break they took (SAR, pg.8). Enrolled and graduated students have confirmed that a higher dropout rate in the first year can indeed be attributed solely to the students' own decision, who chose the study without a stronger motivation, perhaps just as a "trial" to see if it suits them or not.

Science-based funding, project funding, and research funding are vital revenue streams. The SAR does not specify the amount of funding for science in this field of study. However, as per LBTU Science Council Decision No. 22-11 (26 October 2022), science-based financing hinges on researchers' performance points, allocated to faculties for project co-funding, infrastructure development, staff support, publication fees, and conference participation.

The primary expenses associated with implementing the study programme include: salaries, utilities, facility upkeep, equipment maintenance, computer maintenance, office equipment upkeep, transportation services (for internships and study tours), office supplies, study materials, and literature (SAR, pg. 30-31). ERDF financing for the repair of laboratory premises, materials for the improvement of the technical base in 2023 were EUR 126,067.27 (as per written email response from the LBTU responsible person 03/05/2024).

1.3.2.

The criteria regarding infrastructure resources and material and technical support are listed (SAR, p. 32 - 33):

1. Material and Technical Base:

The Faculty of Agriculture and Food Technology (LPTF) serves as the responsible and leading faculty for the study field. The material and technical base of the faculty is designed to provide a modern study and research environment for hospitality studies. The faculty operates in various locations, including Jelgava Castle, where appropriate rooms such as classrooms, practical work rooms, and laboratories are available. A reconstruction project called "Food Technology Laboratory" was implemented in 2020 with the support of the ERDF co-financed project. This laboratory is equipped with professional equipment and designed to simulate real food service establishments. The Food Biochemistry Laboratory within the Chemistry Department of the Food Institute offers modern equipment for studying "Food Biochemistry."

2. Infrastructure at Other Faculties:

The Faculty of Economics and Society Development (ESAF) provides modern classrooms and a computer classroom for learning economic content and foreign languages. The Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies offers a computer classroom for analysing business data. The Faculty of Forest and Environmental Sciences houses classrooms and laboratories for studies related to the working environment, civil protection, and the environment. Auditoriums are equipped with multimedia equipment or large TV screens.

3. Investments in Study Environment:

LBTU has invested significant financial resources in the past decade for improving the study environment, including modernization and adaptation for students with mobility impairments.

4. Access to Additional Services:

Study field students and academic staff have access to various services, including the LBTU Fundamental Library, Sports Centre, participation in artistic collectives, and dormitory services.

5. Documentation and Planning:

The overall LBTU infrastructure and planned investments are summarised in the document "Characteristics of Planned Investments," developed in accordance with the LBTU strategy.

1.3.3.

1. System/Procedure for Improvement and Purchase (SAR, p.33):

The institution has developed a comprehensive system for providing methodological and informational support to students. Each student is assigned a username and password, granting

access to various resources, including the LBTU Information System, e-study environment, email, and library services.

The library offers a wide range of free services, including access to computers, software suites, databases, and training sessions for students and academic staff. Additionally, paid services such as copying, printing, and scanning are available.

The library continuously evaluates and adds new databases to its collection, ensuring that they meet the needs of students and academic staff. Descriptions of databases are posted on the library's website for easy access and understanding.

2. Availability and Suitability of Library Resources and Databases (SAR, p. 35):

The LBTU Fundamental Library provides extensive resources, including online databases – foreign and Latvian e-books, journals, and search engines like PRIMO DISCOVERY, enabling users to access a vast array of scholarly information.

Users have access to subscribed foreign and Latvian online databases (i.e. CAB Abstracts, CRC Press e-books, EBSCO, eBook, Academic Search Complete, MasterFILE Premier, ScienceDirect Journals, Scopus, SciVal, Web of Science, Wiley Online Journals, Lursoft), covering various subjects relevant to the study field, including hospitality management, tourism, and economics.

The institution monitors the activity of academic staff and students in using databases, ensuring that resources are utilised effectively. LBTU systematically tracks the frequency of connections and database searches on an annual basis. With the total number of students and academic staff in the study field accounting for just 1/28 of the overall student and staff population at LBTU in 2023 it becomes feasible to gauge the level of database usage within this specific academic domain. EBSCO seems the most popular (SAR, p. 35 - 36). The library also offers trial periods for new databases and considers recommendations from academic staff for library stock replenishment. As mentioned during the visit, students make extensive use of various online databases available to them and therefore spend much less time in the library, as many of the necessary materials are readily accessible online.

According to SAR (p. 36) The institution follows a "Collection Assembling Policy" prioritising materials related to LBTU study programmes and research directions, as well as complying with the Legal Deposit Law by receiving copies of printed and electronic publications relevant to its specialisation. In addition, on the LBTU FB website, there is a page titled "Purchase of books for LBTU FB collection" (SAR, p. 36), facilitating a transparent process for stakeholders to suggest materials for acquisition. This collaborative approach ensures that the library's collection closely aligns with the curriculum and research interests of the institution. A sufficient amount of funds is allocated for the regular acquisition of library materials, and the funds are centralised at the university level as discussed during the interviews. According to the LBTU decision, they are spent in appropriate amounts annually from the centralised budget.

1.3.4.

1. Comprehensive ICT Infrastructure (SAR, p. 36 - 37): LBTU offers a developed information technology (IT) infrastructure that is well-maintained and regularly updated. This includes Wi-Fi access across all campus buildings, ensuring students and staff can seamlessly access online resources.

2. Versatile Communication Tools (SAR, p. 37): The LBTU portal serves as a robust digital communication tool, offering both internal and external functionalities. It provides access to relevant documents, announcements, and interactive information for students, staff, and prospective students. Additionally, the portal is available in English, enhancing accessibility for a broader audience.

3. E-Learning Environment (SAR, p. 37): LBTU's e-learning environment, built on Moodle, is a key component of the institution's ICT solutions. It hosts all study courses, along with various study materials, activities, recommended resources, and video content. The platform facilitates electronic

communication between students and teaching staff and supports online lectures, seminars, meetings, and consultations through its video conferencing system.

4. Information System (IS) (SAR, p. 37): The institution's information system, with a register of study courses, provides essential information and services to students and staff. It is regularly used for data entry, processing, and accessing student-related information by authorised personnel.

5. Document Management System: LBTU has implemented a document management system, "Namejs," further enhancing efficiency and organisation in handling documents (SAR, p. 37).

6. Adaptability to Distance Learning: While the SAR does not explicitly mention distance learning, the availability of online resources, e-learning platforms, and video conferencing capabilities suggest that LBTU's ICT solutions are adaptable to distance learning requirements. These tools likely play a crucial role in facilitating remote learning experiences for students, especially during times of remote instruction or when students are unable to attend classes in person.

1.3.5.

1. Regulated Recruitment Process: LBTU has a clear and regulated recruitment process for academic positions, as outlined in the "LBTU Regulations Regarding Academic Positions" (https://www.lbtu.lv/sites/default/files/2023-11/Nolikums_akademiskie_amati_2023.pdf) approved by the LBTU Senate (10/05/2023). This regulation governs vacancy announcements, recruitment, and election procedures, ensuring transparency and fairness in the recruitment process.

2. Open Competition Procedure (SAR, p. 37 - 38): Academic positions at LBTU are filled through an open competition procedure, specified in internal documents. This procedure allows for equal opportunities for all applicants and ensures that positions are awarded based on merit and qualifications.

3. Requirements and Qualifications (SAR, p. 37 - 38): Applicants for academic positions are required to have the scientific or academic degrees specified for the particular position, in accordance with the "Law on Higher Education Institutions" of the Republic of Latvia (02/11/1995). Common requirements for all applicants include proficiency in the official language and foreign languages, as well as continuous improvement of academic and scientific qualifications (as per Regulations on Academic Positions of Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies Supplement to Senate's Decision No 11-108, May 10, 2023).

4. Election Process (SAR, p. 38): The election process for academic positions involves several steps, including proposal submission, advertisement publication, and secret ballot elections conducted within specific timeframes. The rector concludes an employment contract with the elected candidate for the specified term, typically six years.

5. Planning and Remuneration (SAR, p. 38): The individual academic work of teaching staff is planned according to established regulations and orders, with remuneration determined based on relevant government regulations and internal policies.

6. Professional Development (SAR, p. 38): By offering professional development opportunities, the institution not only attracts qualified candidates but also fosters a dynamic academic environment conducive to excellence in research and teaching (as per Cabinet Regulation of the Republic of Latvia No. 569 "Regulations Regarding the Education and Professional Qualifications of Teachers and Procedures for the Professional Development of Teachers" (11.09.2018) available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301572-noteikumi-par-pedagogiem-nepieciesamo-izglitiba-un-profesionalo-kvalifikaciju-un-pedagogu-profesionalas-kompetences-pilnveides>). A significant observed shortcoming in the organization of professional development opportunities is the fact that teachers do not have an annual maximum budget at their disposal (specifically for each teacher in an academic or calendar year). The manner in which they propose and request approval for activities they would like to participate in is not sufficiently transparent and does not allow for effective planning of teachers' professional development. The scientific and pedagogical qualification of a professor or associate professor shall be assessed at least once every six years, and the performance of a professor or

associate professor is evaluated at least once every two years by a commission approved by the decision of the Rector (Regulations on Academic Positions of Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Supplement to Senate's Decision No 11-108, May 10, 2023). To facilitate easier and more planned professional advancement for teachers, it would be desirable to introduce a clear procedure for applying for professional development and a specific annual budget.

7. Continuing Education Requirements (SAR, p. 39): Teaching staff are required to acquire pedagogical qualification through continuing professional development programmes, as mandated by government regulations. LBTU offers a professional development programme specifically designed to enhance pedagogical skills and knowledge in higher education didactics.

1.3.6.

LBTU addresses the professional and didactic development needs of its teaching staff, aligning well with the specified criteria (introduced LBTU Council Meeting Decision No. 31 "LBTU Personnel Policy" (08. 09. 2023)):

1. Purposeful Determination of Needs: LBTU demonstrates a proactive approach to identifying the needs of its teaching staff. Through initiatives like the teaching staff motivation system (Latvia University of Life Sciences and technologies (LBTU) Academic Staff Motivation System Supplement to the Decision No. 2.4.-12.2/6 of the Board of Studies, November 30, 2022) and participation in various professional development programmes, conferences, and competitions, the institution ensures that it stays attuned to the evolving requirements of its educators. The Academic Staff Motivation System (Supplement to the Decision No. 2.4.-12.2/6 of the Board of Studies, November 30, 2022) clearly defines all relevant criteria taken into account for motivating academic staff. The Studies Centre, in accordance with the regulation of the Rector, organises the calculation of the total points. The salary increase as per the above mentioned document is calculated according to the formula: Salary increase = total number of points × the amount of EUR per one point. Teachers are satisfied with the criteria, they are familiar with them, but they believe that one point should be worth more than currently defined.

2. Professional Development: LBTU prioritises the professional development of academic staff, offering opportunities for acquiring professional development programmes, participating in conferences and seminars, and taking paid leave for scientific research and work outside the university (SAR, p. 39 - 40). In addition to the structured recruitment process and adherence to legal requirements, LBTU also prioritises the professional development and scholarly activities of its academic staff. Notably, academic staff members are entitled to a paid leave of six calendar months every six years (SAR, p. 38) specifically designated for scientific research and work outside the university. This provision highlights the institution's commitment to supporting the ongoing scholarly pursuits and professional growth of its teaching staff, further enhancing the attractiveness of academic positions at LBTU. What the teachers have highlighted is the fact that there is no decision or regulation regarding the total annual budget that teachers can count on for such activities. As a result, each teacher must independently submit an inquiry, and the programme director decides whether and to what extent an activity can be financed.

3. Utilisation of Appropriate Improvement Measures (SAR, p. 40): The institution offers a diverse range of improvement measures tailored to the identified needs of its teaching staff. These measures include participation in mobility programmes, academic conferences, pedagogical competence improvement programmes, and English language development courses, providing educators with resources and opportunities for growth in their respective domains. The teachers have noted that they enjoy participating in activities every year.

3. Evaluation of Results and Effectiveness (SAR, p. 40 - 41): LBTU conducts thorough evaluations to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of its improvement measures. Student evaluations of teaching staff performance, feedback mechanisms incorporated into professional development programmes, and surveys help gauge the impact of these initiatives on teaching quality and the

overall study process. In accordance with the Rector's regulation "On Data Collection for Academic Staff Motivation System for 2023" (No. 4.3-8/216) clear methods are specified, and there exists a clear procedure for data collection based on the criteria of the academic staff motivation system. The Studies Centre participates in data collection, systematically gathering all data from the LBTU IS and E-studies system. Additionally, the following are involved in the data collection process: Deans of faculties/heads of Language Centre and Sports Centre, Communication and Marketing Centre, Centre of Lifelong Education, Personnel Department, and Heads of structural units. Each of the mentioned entities collects and provides data from their respective domains. The Finance Planning Centre is responsible for calculating the salary increase for each academic staff member based on the received points.

4. Continuous Improvement (SAR, p. 40): The institution's commitment to continuous improvement is evident in its responsive approach to refining professional development strategies based on evaluation outcomes. By incorporating feedback from student evaluations and performance metrics into its teaching staff motivation system, LBTU fosters a culture of ongoing learning and development among educators.

1.3.7.

1) Academic Workload Balance (SAR, p. 41 - 42): At Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, academic work encompasses pedagogical activities, research endeavours, and ensuring the quality of the study process. The 44 academic staff members are involved in the implementation of the study programme for the academic year 2022/2023. The breakdown of the academic staff by rank: professors, associate professors, assistant professors, lecturers, and researchers. More than 50% of the teaching staff hold PhD degrees.

The workload planning is done in accordance with internal regulatory documents, which include specific regulations for calculating academic workload ("Regulation on calculation of academic workload" Supplement to the Senate's decision No. 11 - 87, February 08, 2023). As per the above and SAR (p. 41 - 42) the total academic load for the study programme is quantified as 6.14 loads for the academic year 2023/2024. Taking into account the formula for calculating workload on an annual basis, the academic workload for: (1) a regular professor would amount to 333 hours; (2) an associate professor would range between 404.8 and 469.2 hours (3) an assistant professor would range between 253.8 and 1,145.6 hours; (4) a lecturer would amount to 489.6 hours. As explained by the responsible person from LBTU (in writing) for each member of the teaching staff, the workload is composed of various academic tasks, as outlined by the regulations, which specify the eligible activities and their respective standards. The workload size depends on the number of courses taught and the number of students enrolled in those courses. The academic load is calculated using a formula provided in the regulations. If a teaching staff member works across multiple LBTU institutes or faculties, the total workload is centrally monitored to ensure it does not exceed a full-time equivalent of 1.

The workload calculation mentioned above takes into account factors such as the amount of academic work per hour, hours specified for the position, study plan, semester of the study course, and number of students. Based on the provided conditions regarding the planning and management of academic workload at Latvia University of Life Sciences (Regulation on the calculation of academic workload in: Supplement to the Senate's decision No. 11 - 87, February 08, 2023) , the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Consideration of Student Numbers: The university takes into account the number of students in a group when planning academic workload, allowing flexibility in contact hours if the group size falls below a certain threshold.

- Limitations for Doctoral Programs: There are specific limitations on the allocation of contact hours for doctoral programmes, ensuring that workload remains manageable for both students and academic staff.

- Restrictions for Full-Time Staff: Full-time academic staff members have clear restrictions on the number of theses and projects they can supervise per academic year, ensuring a balanced workload.
- International Student Consideration: A coefficient system is in place to adjust contact hours for work conducted in English with international students, reflecting the university's commitment to supporting internationalisation efforts.
- Flexibility Based on Student Enrollment: The individual workload of academic staff members is adjusted based on changes in student enrollment, ensuring that workload remains appropriate and manageable.

Based on the assessment report and field visit talks with faculty, a structured approach to managing academic workload is demonstrated, with clear guidelines and restrictions in place to maintain a balanced workload for academic staff while considering factors such as student numbers and internationalisation efforts.

2) Administrative Workload Balance:

At LBTU, teaching staff are allowed to hold administrative positions concurrently. In such cases, their academic workload should not exceed 0.5 of a full load. This ensures a balance between the teachers' administrative duties and their other work obligations. Administrative positions currently hold: Ilze Beitane – Vice-rector for Studies; Martins Sabovics – Head of International Cooperation Centre & Liene Ozola – Vice-dean of Faculty of Agriculture and Food Technology (as per written response in email, dated: 13/05/2023)

3) Research Workload Balance:

According to the List of Publications (Annex number 5 - Study field), it is concluded that teachers engaged in this field of study have published over 680 scientific papers but mostly not related to this study field. Publishing papers closely related to the field of study should be encouraged, as it demonstrates that the teachers involved in the programme are keeping up with trends, guiding the field in that direction, and ultimately creating new insights. The teachers indicated that they are additionally burdened with scientific work, but they also acknowledge that it is part of the nature of their job and did not express significant concern about it.

1.3.8.

1. Identification of Student Needs (SAR, p. 43 - 44): LBTU has identified the diverse needs of its student body, including students from abroad, part-time students, distance learning students, students with special needs, etc. The institution recognizes the importance of addressing these specific needs to ensure the well-being and success of all students.

2. Establishment of Support System (SAR, p. 43 - 44): LBTU has established a functioning support system to meet the identified needs of students. This system includes various types of support, such as informational, methodological, technical, financial, career, and psychological support, tailored to the specific requirements of different student groups.

3. Informational Support (SAR, p. 43): The institution provides up-to-date information on the study process, schedule of classes, study programme content, scholarships, admission procedures, and required documents through its portal and intranet site. This ensures that students have access to essential information to navigate their academic journey effectively.

4. Methodological Support (SAR, p. 43): Students have access to consultations on study courses, both in person and online, along with study materials and methodological instructions published on faculties' websites. This support enhances students' understanding of course requirements and aids in their academic success. According to the "Analysis of survey results of students, graduates and employers in the study direction "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation" (file:///C:/Users/Korisnik/Downloads/Survey_student_graduates_employers-1.pdf) 59% of interviewed students agree that study environment materials are thoughtful, easy to understand and interesting. However, it is worth noting that 37% of the students think their quality depends on the study course. The assessment of the quality of study materials (lecture presentations, handouts, etc.) offered in

the study courses show that more than 70% of students think they are professional, knowledgeable, and competent. Almost 60% of them think they are creative and motivating for students. Around 35% of them think they are difficult to assess because they are very different.

5. Technical Support (SAR, p. 44): LBTU offers technical support to prevent disturbances in the e-learning environment and internet use disruptions, ensuring smooth access to online resources for distance learning students and others relying on digital platforms for their studies.

6. Financial Support (SAR, p. 44): The institution provides various scholarship opportunities for full-time students, including state scholarships, one-time scholarships, scholarships offered by the LBTU Development Foundation, and social scholarships. Additionally, students may receive tuition fee remission in accordance with established procedures. For instance, The Rector of LBTU presented a report on tuition fee discounts for successful students, based on a decision by the Student Self-Government. The Supervisory Board approved the following discounts: (1) Children (up to 24 years old) of LBTU staff members with at least 10 years of service receive a 100% discount if they are first-time undergraduate students; (2) Disabled undergraduates and master's students (up to 24 years old) in Disability Groups 1 and 2, orphans, and students not supported by parents may receive up to a 50% discount based on successful study results; (3) Student-athletes in full-time undergraduate or master's programmes may receive: (a) Up to 100% discount if they are national team members or part of a team with a cooperation agreement with LBTU; (b) Up to 50% discount if they are national team candidates representing LBTU; (4) Ex-matriculated students are not eligible for fee exemptions upon resuming studies & (5) The decision is communicated to various departments and centres within LBTU. A clearly defined Procedure for granting tuition fee discount for students exists (Rector's regulation, No. 4.3.-8/176). Students have expressed their satisfaction with the financial support available to them.

7. Career and Psychological Support (SAR, p. 44): LBTU organises career days, professional internship matchmaking, and psychological support programmes to assist students in their personal and professional development. These initiatives contribute to students' holistic growth and well-being and students agree with that. They particularly emphasised that they have the opportunity to suggest employers where they would like to do internships.

8. Support for Foreign Students (SAR, p. 44): LBTU offers comprehensive support to foreign students, including assistance with the application process, accommodation arrangements, orientation programmes, technical support for visa and residence permit matters, information dissemination on internal regulations and available healthcare services, and cultural integration activities. These efforts ensure that foreign students feel welcome and supported throughout their academic journey at LBTU.

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

The LBTU has established a centralised system for determining and redistributing financial support required for the implementation of study fields and corresponding study programmes. This system involves rigorous annual budget reviews and approvals, with oversight from multiple university bodies and independent audits ensuring accountability. While LBTU faculties do not have direct control over their budgets, programme heads can request financial information from deans and university leaders, although this information is approximate due to the centralised decision-making process.

The professional bachelor study programme "Restaurant and Hotel Management" complies with the specified criteria regarding infrastructure resources and material and technical support. The facilities, laboratories, and additional services available to students and staff indicate a well-equipped environment conducive to teaching and learning in the field of hospitality management.

The institution demonstrates compliance with the specified criteria regarding the development of a

system/procedure for the improvement and purchase of methodological and informative provision, as well as the availability and suitability of library resources and databases for the study field "Restaurant and Hotel Management." The range of services, access to diverse resources, and systematic approach to resource management indicate a robust support system for students and academic staff in their academic endeavours.

LBTU's ICT solutions appear to be appropriate and effective in supporting the study process. The institution demonstrates a comprehensive approach to utilising technology to enhance teaching, learning, and administrative processes, with a particular emphasis on accessibility, communication, and adaptability to evolving educational needs. The financial resources are secured from the central treasury of the university.

LBTU demonstrates compliance with the specified criteria regarding the defined, implemented, and followed procedures for attracting qualified teaching staff. The institution's structured recruitment process, adherence to legal requirements, emphasis on professional development, and transparent election procedures contribute to the effectiveness and credibility of its recruitment practices. These efforts ensure that teaching staff are selected based on merit, qualifications, and commitment to academic excellence, fostering a conducive environment for quality education and research. For the evaluation process, LBTU has provided several CVs of academic staff members that verify their qualifications.

LBTU's comprehensive approach to addressing the professional and didactic development needs of its teaching staff ensures that educators receive tailored support and opportunities for growth, ultimately enhancing teaching quality and the overall study experience for students.

The LBTU has a clear framework for funding scientific, applied research, and artistic creation, which is based on performance metrics and supports various academic and infrastructural needs. Despite a gap between the estimated cost of studying and the available funding per student, there has been a significant improvement in state funding over the past decade. The institution's financial planning aims to address this disparity and ensure adequate resources for study programs, while also adapting to demographic changes and student enrollment trends.

The academic workload is meticulously balanced across pedagogical activities, research endeavours, and quality assurance processes. The university's internal regulations effectively manage the distribution of workload, ensuring that academic staff, more than half of whom hold PhD degrees, can maintain a balanced approach to their responsibilities. The structured approach to workload planning includes consideration of student numbers, specific limitations for doctoral programs, and adjustments based on student enrollment, demonstrating a commitment to maintaining manageable and appropriate workloads. For administrative workload, LBTU ensures that academic staff holding administrative positions do not exceed 0.5 of a full academic load, promoting a balance between administrative and academic responsibilities. In terms of research workload, while the publication record is robust, there is encouragement for faculty to focus more on research related to their field of study. Overall, the university's comprehensive and flexible workload management system supports the staff's ability to fulfil their diverse roles effectively while promoting a balanced and sustainable working environment.

The institution's proactive approach to addressing students' needs contributes to an inclusive and supportive learning environment conducive to student success and well-being. Students have expressed great satisfaction with the support provided by the university, including financial assistance.

Strengths:

- 1) a wide range of online databases available to students and teachers, which they use in their daily studies/work
- 2) good support of information and communication technologies is available to students and teachers
- 3) providing adequate support to students, which they recognize and appreciate

4) the teachers are satisfied with the motivational system and the balanced workload

Weaknesses:

- 1) The budget at the university level is overly centralised, which complicates and slows down decision-making regarding individual expenses according to the needs of specific faculties or study programs.
- 2) There is no clearly regulated annual financial support available to teachers.
- 3) Insufficiently published papers in the field of study

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1.

Whether this professional bachelor study programme "Restaurant and Hotel Management" and study field allow and even require interdisciplinary research to develop a balanced programme and offer knowledge and competencies relevant to the labour market, the research in this study field is carried out in four main directions: tourism industry, food production, higher level hospitality studies and business and sustainable management (SAR p. 45). LBTU has declared 97 publications in respective directions during the last six years (Annex 5. The list of publications, patents and artistic, creative activities of the teaching staff of the study direction "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation" period: 2017-2023). Although the general number is sufficient and contributes to developing LBTU research, some articles seem far from the study field and programme. For example, research about the nutrition of pre-school meals or psycho-neurological patients' diets does not contribute to the knowledge necessary for this field of study. Based on the number of publications, the most popular research direction is the production of food products, which are unfortunately the farthest from the need of this study field, focusing in depth (e.g., chemical composition, processing methods, etc.) on certain food content. There have been 19 publications in the business management research direction within the last six years, but 13 were written by one author, 15 in Latvian, and one in Russian. It is hard to find how this research direction contributes to the LBTU aim (and KPI) to increase the number (and %) of the Q1-Q2 publications in the total number of publications included in the Scopus and Web of Science databases. There are no publications in 2022-2023 (although the submission of SAR was at the beginning of 2024 and information should have been available for this time) in the tourism industry and advanced hospitality studies research directions. The latest and highly rated research and publications are written in the direction of nutrition and the production of food products, which have less impact on the quality of this study field.

Based on the LBTU Strategy (https://www.lbtu.lv/sites/default/files/2023-11/Strategija_2023_ENG_0.pdf), the KPIs of the research activity, which reflect the achievement of the set goals, are 1) Share of Q1-Q2 publications in the total number of publications included in the Scopus and Web of Science databases; 2) The proportion of funding raised within the framework of international scientific cooperation from the funding of LBTU's scientific activity (per year) and 3) Enterprise (private) funding from LBTU scientific activity funding (per year). Although the LBTU does not measure those KPIs at the study field level, the expert team can conclude, based on the provided materials, that this study field does not contribute a lot to the achievement of the KPIs and LBTU strategic research goals (the number of high-rated publications is decreasing, no attracted funding in this study field).

1.4.2.

One of the aims of LBTU (SAR, p. 4 and https://www.lbtu.lv/sites/default/files/2023-11/Strategija_2023_ENG_0.pdf) is to ensure that scientific

and applied research plays an integral role in the study field and study programme, with research findings incorporated into various study courses to enrich the educational experience. However, according to Annex 5 (The list of publications, patents, and artistic, creative activities of the teaching staff of the study direction "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation" period: 2017-2023), there are only a few publications directly contributing to the core topics of this study field and programme. Most research and publications highlight scientific activity in the field of food technology. In the past two years, there has been no significant applied research in this study field that directly supports the aim of the study field (the objective of the study field is to provide high-quality studies that ensure the training of internationally competitive specialists for the hospitality sector of the tourism industry, SAR, page 14).

Despite academic staff's claims of incorporating the latest scientific research into their courses, a closer look at the course descriptions (Annex 8. Mapping_study_courses.xlsx) reveals a different reality. Most obligatory study materials are from the early 2000s, with only a handful of books published after 2020. While it's encouraging to see some periodical journals included in the study materials list, the course descriptions fail to explain how these articles and journals are used in the study process. Students, in particular, noted during the interview that most study materials are in Latvian, indicating a need for more utilisation of the latest English publications in the study process. Concerns also arise regarding the alignment between the titles/topics of some courses and the lecturers' publication topics. For example, lecturers whose scientific articles focus on different fields (e.g., nutrition, school meals) teach core hospitality business courses (e.g., Hospitality Business Management, Hotel Service Management, Hospitality Business). This mismatch suggests that lecturers' competencies may not align with the courses they teach, preventing them from sharing their research results with students, as their research does not pertain to the course themes.

During the visit, the academic staff and employer representatives were interviewed, and they confirmed that there is no joint applied research in this field. Employers, however, expressed interest in collaborating with LBTU in this area.

1.4.3.

International collaboration is carried on through three types of activities: staff participation in the editorial boards of international scientific journals, evaluation of national and international projects, and involvement in international organisations and institutions.

Although SAR p 46 states that there is a project funded by the Latvian Council of Science ("National Identity: The Gastro-poietic Aspect. Historical, International and Interdisciplinary Context.") which is related to this study field, so this project does not have an international nature and partners. In the SAR also, the Erasmus KA2 projects are mentioned, and the LBTU Erasmus_Policy_Statement_2021_2027.pdf brings out the specific goal of LLU for the Erasmus+ programme, which is to enhance the international competence of all involved participants by improving the quality of studies and encouraging the creativity and productivity of scientific research. Nevertheless, there is no other information about implementing any KA2 projects in this field of study.

Based on the available information about Erasmus KA2 projects and other various European Union co-financed projects in which the LBTU and/or Faculty act both as Lead partner and as a cooperation partner (according to the information on the webpage <https://www.lbtu.lv/en/international-research-projects?page=0>), there are no ongoing international projects related to this study field.

International cooperation is carried out mainly through staff initiative and participation in editorial boards. According to Annex 5 (The list of publications, patents, and artistic, creative activities of the teaching staff of the study direction "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation"), there are no joint articles written with scientists from abroad, which could be one proof of the implementation of international collaboration.

1.4.4.

The teaching staff is involved in research through several avenues, including following calls for proposals for research programmes and projects, participating in the organisation of scientific conferences, seminars, and international scientific events, activating cooperation developed within the framework of mobility, and leveraging personal contacts.

The engagement of teaching staff in scientific research is promoted in several ways: ensuring the availability of current information on the LBTU webpage <https://www.lbtu.lv/en/science-innovations>, building a supportive relationship with the LBTU Science and Project Development Center, and providing additional funding for scientific performance within each year.

Although over the last six years of the reporting period, the teaching staff of LBTU involved in implementing the study programme has produced 602 publications, including 435 published in SCOPUS and Web of Science databases, these impressive numbers do not directly support the development of the study field and study programme. Academic staff participation in study field-related international and other conferences has decreased over the last three years (SAR p. 48: 2020/21 - 30; 2021/22 - 17; and 2022/23 - 15 participations).

Despite the decrease in academic staff participation in study field-related international and other conferences over the last three years, the high number of publications and their participation in conferences demonstrate the effectiveness of the system. This reassures that the academic staff are supported and motivated to contribute to academic publications, instilling a sense of confidence in the system.

1.4.5.

Students actively participate in research relevant to their field, mainly through developing their bachelor theses. Recently, a positive trend has emerged: Research initiated in bachelor theses, when further explored in collaboration with thesis supervisors and graduates, yields more scientifically robust results. These enhanced findings are presented at conferences and seminars (SAR, p. 50 and (<https://www.ptf.lbtu.lv/lv/studentu-konferences>) .

The study field organises scientific seminars where research results are presented and discussed. In 2022, the first Inter-University Scientific Conference of Tourism and Hospitality Students was organised with the Information System Management University (Latvia). Students of the study field regularly participate in the international student scientific conference “Students on their Way to Science” organised by LBTU and the annual student conference of the LPTF Food Institute. These events provide opportunities to present hospitality research results and insights to a broader audience.

Teaching staff and students in the study field are also involved in the annual event Researchers Night, which aims to introduce the public to scientific achievements and research work. Student involvement in scientific research is well-established and implemented. Evidence of student motivation for scientific research includes that around 20% of graduates continue their studies at the master’s level. In recent years, two graduates of the study programme continued their studies at the doctoral level after their master’s studies and obtained PhD degrees.

1.4.6.

Some examples of product, process and organisational innovation exist at LBTU and in this study field. Examples of product innovation are the newly equipped laboratories (e.g. the Food Technology laboratory) and the implementation of catering business management computer software R-keeper in the study process. Process innovation focuses on e-tools and solutions - development and new functionalities of e-learning platform, including recording and provision of video lectures. Although LBTU mentions (SAR, p. 50-51) using different social media platforms as process innovation, the nature of those projects is probably a standard process and is not taken as innovation nowadays.

Developing a Learning management system as an integrated data platform with study

management-supportive functionality is considered an organisational innovation. This system is an innovation for the LBTU compared to the previous situation with managing students' data, documentation, etc. Still, in the broader plan, this is more like a "must be" in our digitalised world. It is encouraging to witness the remarkable strides that LBTU and its Faculties are making in introducing and implementing new, modern platforms. However, it is equally important to direct the attention to potential innovations in study methods. These innovations, which can directly benefit our students, should be a key focus for LBTU's future endeavours.

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

In conclusion, the study field demonstrates significant strengths, including integrated research interests spanning from food to the hotel industry, a motivated and engaged academic staff, and a variety of initiatives from LBTU to promote scientific research. Additionally, students are actively involved in research, and the organisation of scientific seminars and innovations in e-tools and platforms enhance study management.

However, there are notable weaknesses. The research does not fully support the intended integration of necessary research areas, often focusing on narrow topics unrelated to the study field. Study materials do not reflect the latest research findings, and there is a mismatch between publication topics and the courses taught. Furthermore, there is a lack of joint applied research with employers, no ongoing international projects related to this study field, and no joint publications with international scientists. Academic staff participation in relevant international conferences has also decreased over the past three years. Addressing these weaknesses could further strengthen the study field's research integration and international collaboration.

Strengths:

- 1) Integrated research interests (from food to hotel industry) and plans.
- 2) Motivated, engaged and well publishing academic staff. The teaching staff is involved in research through several avenues.
- 3) Variety of activities and initiations from LBTU side to promote scientific research possibilities among staff.
- 4) Students actively participate in research relevant to their field.
- 5) The study field organises scientific seminars where research results are presented and discussed.
- 6) Innovations in developing e-tools and platforms contributing to better study management.

Weaknesses:

- 1) research does not support the intended integration of research areas necessary for this study field and focus on narrow topics not connected with the study field.
- 2) Study materials do not reflect the sharing of latest field research results with the students.
- 3) Publications topics and the courses taught by the authors of those publications do not match.
- 4) There is no joint applied research with the employers and no ongoing international projects related to this study field.
- 5) There are no joint articles written with scientists from abroad, which could be one proof of the implementation of international collaboration.
- 6) Academic staff participation in study field-related international and other conferences has decreased over the last three years.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Good involvement of academic staff in publishing and conferences and successful involvement of students into the research activities, but number of the field specific applied research and (international) projects is small.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1.

The LBTU collaborates extensively with various institutions in Latvia, including professional associations, non-governmental organisations, vocational education institutions, and employers in the hospitality industry. List of cooperation agreements concluded in the study field "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation" is provided (Annex 2 - study field). In the reporting period (according to the mentioned list, Annex 2 - study field), 19 agreements with foreign higher education institutions were signed. All of them were signed in 2021. Seven (7) agreements were signed with Latvian professional secondary educational institutions, two (2) with industry associations, three (3) with hospitality companies and five (5) with cooperation companies for the organisation of professional practices in Europe. Criteria for selecting cooperation partners include strategic relevance, reputation, professional experience, and cooperation abilities aligned with the goals and values of the study direction. Cooperation agreements are based on mutual agreements regarding the implementation of various activities such as study process, professional traineeships, organisation of events, and research. Cooperation encompasses various activities such as implementation of the study process, external evaluation of study programs, professional traineeships, organisation of events, and research. Long-term partnerships exist with industry associations such as the Association of Hotels and Restaurants and the Association of Latvian Food Service. Industry experts actively contribute to the study programmes by conducting classes, evaluating programme content, offering final thesis topics, and participating in research and evaluation processes.

The university's collaboration with institutions in Latvia, particularly within the study field of "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation," significantly contributes to the aims and learning outcomes in several ways:

Alignment with Learning Objectives: The cooperation partners are selected based on their strategic relevance, reputation, and professional experience, ensuring that their involvement directly contributes to achieving the learning objectives and aims of the study field.

Enhancement of Study Programs: Collaboration with industry associations, vocational education institutions, and employers enriches the study programmes by providing practical insights, industry expertise, and real-world experiences, thereby enhancing the relevance and quality of education. Partners in collaboration develop and propose final thesis topics, allowing students to select and conduct research pertinent to the field (as confirmed in interviews and as per SAR, p. 52). All final theses undergo peer review by management personnel from hospitality companies, ensuring rigorous evaluation (SAR, p. 52). Moreover, prominent experts in the field serve as members of the State Examination Commission, actively participating in the assessment process of final theses (SAR, p. 52).

Practical Application and Skill Development:

Activities such as professional traineeships, participation in projects, and organisation of events offer students opportunities for practical application of knowledge and skill development, which align with the intended learning outcomes of the study field. Annually, approximately 70 Latvian hospitality companies, encompassing both public sector food service entities, engage in facilitating professional traineeships (SAR, p. 52). Internship opportunities within Latvian hospitality enterprises (51 different

enterprises) are determined by established tripartite cooperation agreements, outlining the terms of the internship. The organisation of these traineeships at LBTU adheres to the guidelines outlined in the "LBTU Regulations on the Procedure for Organizing Traineeships" (14.12.2022). One notable event is the Inter-University Tourism and Hospitality Students' Scientific Conference, held in 2022, with the next edition scheduled for May 2024. Additionally, a significant gathering of representatives from food service companies occurred at the seminar titled "Catering Service in Educational Institutions in Latvia: Challenges and Prospects" in 2022 (SAR, p. 52)

Collaboration with industry partners contribute to the advancement of knowledge, innovation, and research skills among students and staff, which are essential components of the learning outcomes. Industry-Relevant Expertise: Involvement of industry experts in teaching, curriculum development, and evaluation processes ensures that students gain exposure to current industry practices, trends, and challenges, thereby preparing them for successful careers in the hospitality sector. This was confirmed during conducting interviews with students and graduates.

1.5.2.

1) Cooperation with Institutions from Abroad (SAR, p. 54 - 55): The university actively collaborates with higher education institutions, state organisations, and companies in the tourism and hospitality sector from abroad. Cooperation encompasses various areas such as implementation of the study process, evaluation of study programme content, organisation of professional traineeships, and activities planned in the field of research.

2) Involvement in ERASMUS+ Programme (SAR, p. 54): Through the ERASMUS+ programme, the university engages teaching staff from cooperating universities abroad, enriching the study process with diverse perspectives and expertise. Foreign lecturers contribute to teaching classes and provide insights into different cultural and professional aspects related to the study field. Despite the Erasmus agreements and the opportunities provided by this program, an analysis and interviews reveal that very few courses are offered in English, which certainly does not encourage incoming mobility. Additionally, the teachers who participated in the interviews demonstrated a very good command of the English language, so providing them with opportunities and new prospects through a certain motivation system would certainly be beneficial. There is no course catalogue published online on the website which could be a good source for different information about this study field for all interested foreign students/teachers.

3) Evaluation of Study Programme Content (SAR, p. 54): Foreign experts, such as a professor from Warsaw University of Life Sciences, have been involved in detailed evaluations of study programme content, contributing to its improvement and alignment with international standards.

Participation in Projects (SAR, p. 54): Collaboration with foreign partners extends to participation in the projects, including visits to foreign municipalities to learn about best practices, organising think-tanks on topics such as sustainable farming and culinary heritage. Nevertheless, during the interviews, none of the participants were able to name any projects which are directly linked with the study programme.

Selection Criteria for International Partners (SAR, p. 54): Partners are selected based on criteria such as strategic relevance, reputation, professional experience, cooperation abilities, and geographic considerations, ensuring alignment with the goals and values of the study field.

Attraction of International Partners (SAR, p. 54): Various methods are employed to attract international partners, including participation in international events, utilisation of online resources, and cooperation agreements such as the ERASMUS+ programme. However, additional planned activities that involve teachers and students could be a good source of attracting partners.

Diverse Perspectives: Engagement with international partners provides students and faculty with diverse perspectives and expertise, enriching the learning experience and broadening their understanding of global trends and practices in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Enhanced Curriculum: Involvement of foreign experts in evaluating study programme content

ensures alignment with international standards and best practices, enhancing the curriculum's quality and relevance.

Practical Insights: Collaboration in projects and initiatives, such as professional traineeships and research endeavours, offers students practical insights and hands-on experience, enabling them to develop relevant skills and competencies essential for success in the field. Professional internships in international hospitality firms are arranged through finalised tripartite cooperation agreements, specifying the terms of the internship. These companies are not affiliated with the Erasmus+ programme (4 companies) (Annex 2 - The list of cooperation agreements concluded during the reporting period in the study direction "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation")

Cultural Exchange: Participation in international events and partnerships facilitates cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding, fostering a global mindset among students and faculty and preparing them for a diverse and interconnected professional landscape. For instance, Tokushima University's lecturers from Japan deliver insightful lectures on Asian gastronomy and culture, while professionals from Italy, Greece, and Spain enrich classes with their expertise on current tourism trends and practices, offering students valuable insights into professional opportunities in Southern Europe (SAR, p. 54).

1.5.3.

LBTU implements various marketing activities, including participation in international education fairs, forums, and e-marketing initiatives. These efforts align with the criterion of developing systems and procedures for attracting teaching staff and students from abroad within the study field (SAR, p. 55- 56)

LBTU's involvement in partnerships and memberships, such as with recruitment agents, the Higher Education Export Association of Latvia (AIEA), and the ERASMUS+ programme, demonstrates a commitment to fostering international collaborations and attracting foreign talent.

LBTU's membership in the ERASMUS+ programme and the regular conclusion of cooperation agreements with European higher education institutions facilitate both incoming and outgoing student mobility. LBTU participates in the ERASMUS+ programme, welcoming students from other European universities in fields like tourism management, guest service management, and nutrition (Annex 4 - Incoming and outgoing mobility of students of the study direction). According to Annex 4 (Incoming and outgoing mobility of students of the study direction) during the period from 2013/2014 to 2022/2023, 28 students from abroad chose to study in this program. LBTU concludes cooperation agreements with higher education institutions in European countries offering similar study fields. Specifically, during the reporting period for the "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism, and Recreation Organization" study field, LBTU concluded more than 15 cooperation agreements under the ERASMUS+ programme. From the academic year 2013/2014 until 2022/2023, a total of 89 students travelled to one of the partner countries (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Austria, Spain, UK...) to attend one semester (two - three months) in a similar study program. Regarding internships, a total of 95 students took advantage of such opportunities during the same period. The Bachelor study programme of the first cycle of professional higher education, "Restaurant and Hotel Management," attracted a total of 22 teaching staff members (incoming) during the period from 2013/2014 to 2022/2023. In the same period a total of 126 outgoing mobility was realised. The duration of incoming and outgoing mobility for teaching staff ranges from four (4) to five (5) working days.

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

The LBTU's collaboration with various institutions in Latvia, particularly in the field of "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation," significantly enhances the study

field/programme by aligning it with industry-relevant expertise and learning objectives. Through partnerships with professional associations, vocational institutions, and hospitality companies, students benefit from practical applications, skill development, and exposure to current industry practices, ensuring a comprehensive and relevant educational experience. Students expressed high satisfaction with the internships, the way the internships were organised, and the ability to choose the institution/organisation where they want to complete their professional practice.

The LBTU cooperation with institutions abroad plays a vital role in advancing the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme by providing students with a comprehensive and globally-oriented education, enhancing their employability and competitiveness in the international tourism and hospitality industry.

The LBTU demonstrates strong adherence to the criteria by fostering extensive collaboration with institutions abroad, particularly within the tourism and hospitality sector. The partnerships are characterised by diverse activities aimed at enhancing the quality and global relevance of the study programs, integrating international expertise, and promoting cross-cultural exchange and research collaboration.

Strengths:

- 1) Good networking and quality collaboration with local partners in the study field.
- 2) Existence of interest in mobility, especially through the Erasmus+ programme (students and teachers).

Weaknesses:

- 1) There is an insufficient offering of courses in foreign languages, especially English. It is necessary to encourage teachers to engage in teaching courses in English.
- 2) No "Course Catalogue" for courses offered in English.
- 3) Insufficient activities aimed at promoting international mobility of students and teachers, as well as incoming mobility.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

LBTU cooperates with different stakeholders from Latvia and from abroad and different activities undertaken clearly contribute to the achievement of the aims of the study field.

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

Analysis

1.6.1. In the previous assessment of the study field there have been twelve recommendations. They were as following:

1. The evaluation of the study results and conflict aversion and problem solving tools should be systemised and made more transparent.

In the "Regulation of Studies" (Supplement to the decision made by the Senate 14.06.2023 No. 11-110) there is a section (section 5.) which explains the process of a complaint. Through conducting interviews in assessment visit it could be seen that students are aware of the existence and use of study regulations document (Regulation of Studies) (Supplement to the decision made by the Senate 14.06.2023 No. 11- 110)) and understand that in case of conflict recourse should be sought within this jurisdiction. There is also an option to submit proposals anonymously using the whistleblowing

option on the LBTU portal <https://www.lbtu.lv/lv/trauksmes-celsana> (in Latvian). None have used this possibility. See also 1.2.1 in this report. The experts see this recommendation to be partially implemented.

2. The quality assurance system should be more systemised.

LBTU has implemented an internal quality management system founded on international standards for excellence, as developed by the Investors in Excellence organisation. According to the Self-Assessment Report (SAR, p. 24), this internal quality assurance system follows a four-step process: planning, action, verification, and improvement. This continuous process is designed to enhance and develop both study fields and programs. In line with this quality system, LBTU prepares self-evaluation reports for each study field and program. These reports are publicly accessible on the LBTU website, enabling stakeholders to monitor and contribute to the improvement of the study environment. At the end of each study semester (in accordance with the LBTU rector's order "On the Procedure for Conducting a Regular Survey of Students to Assess the Quality of the Study Process" (28.04.2022) (internal document)), students evaluate the quality of the study courses they have taken during the semester. The results of the evaluation are presented in a summarised form for each study course by the study programme director, heads of departments. See also paragraph 1.2.3 of this report. The experts see this recommendation to be fully implemented.

3. The reply on stakeholders' feedback should be provided on regular bases.

Students fill out the study course evaluation survey at the end of each course and the whole programme. Students are not provided with feedback after completion of course evaluation surveys, including written summaries. Following internships, the employer fills out a form assessing the performance of the intern. Annual meetings are conducted to allow employers to provide feedback on the organisation of the programme. Additionally, the results of the graduate survey, conducted once a year, are analysed at LBTU. The experts see this recommendation to be partially implemented.

4. The financial sources should be diversified (different projects allocating extra financing should be developed).

The study programme is supported by a variety of funding sources, including allocations from the LR state budget, contributions from individuals, proceeds from scientific research activities, and financing from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). This diversified funding strategy ensures robust financial support from multiple channels. Further information can be found in section 2.3.3 of this report. The experts see this recommendation to be not implemented.

5. The academic staff development policy should be more systemised.

The teaching staff have possibilities to enhance their professional development through attendance at various conferences or participation in diverse activities, with provision for reimbursement of associated expenses. It is recommended for the teaching staff to go into internships themselves and through conducting interviews in assessment visit it could be seen the teaching staff frequently leverage this opportunity. The experts see this recommendation to be partially implemented.

6. Cooperation with national and foreign higher education institutions should be developed.

During the assessment visit, it was not fully elucidated which higher education institutions LBTU collaborates with. As outlined in the 1.5.1. section of this report, one notable event is the Inter-University Tourism and Hospitality Students' Scientific Conference, held in 2022, with the next edition scheduled for May 2024. Additionally, a significant gathering of representatives from food service companies occurred at the seminar titled "Catering Service in Educational Institutions in Latvia: Challenges and Prospects" in 2022. As previously outlined in section 1.4.4. of this report: International collaboration within the study field encompasses staff involvement in editorial boards of scientific journals, project evaluations, and engagement with international organisations. While a project funded by the Latvian Council of Science pertains to the study field, it lacks international partners and scope. The focus on enhancing international competence within the Erasmus+ programme aligns with the institution's goals, yet specific implementation details regarding KA2

projects remain unclear. Despite faculty participation in various European Union co-financed projects, there is a lack of ongoing international projects directly related to the study field, as evidenced by the absence of joint publications with foreign scientists. The experts see this recommendation to be partially implemented.

7. The cooperation with employers should be further developed: involvement in study programme direction, guest lectures.

Employers participate in the assessment of theses, they have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. The university officially collaborates with the Association of Hotels and Restaurants of Latvia (as member) and the Latvian Food Service Association (as cooperation partner). During the assessment visit, employers noted that there is always potential to enhance cooperation and highlighted a concern that they are not sufficiently involved in decision-making processes. Additionally, during the assessment visit, students expressed a desire for more engagement from industry professionals, such as guest lectures. The experts see this recommendation to be fully implemented.

8. English language skills of the academic staff should be developed in order to continue internationalisation processes.

Within the framework of the ESF project No. 8.2.2.0/18/A/014 "Perfection of Academic Staff of LBTU" (01.01.2019–30.06.2022) the improvement of the English language skills of the academic staff was implemented, including individual classes with native English language teachers. LBTU also provides English language courses at the Language Centre for both academic and general staff, partially covering the costs of the courses. During the assessment visit, it was also mentioned that the teaching staff takes advantage of the opportunity to attend free English courses provided by the Jelgava municipality. The experts see this recommendation to be fully implemented.

9. English and other foreign language skills of students should be developed in order to develop their competitiveness in the labour market.

Foreign language courses are provided as follows: a) In the 1st semester, study course "Professional Foreign Language in Hospitality", which is English (volume 6 CP); b) In the 2nd semester, study course "Professional Foreign Language in Hospitality", which is German (3 CP), misleading title; c) In the 3rd semester, study course "Professional Foreign Language in Hospitality", which allows the student to choose Spanish or Russian (2 CP); d) Taking free elective courses (which take place in foreign language). During the assessment visit, students mentioned that the short courses in German, Spanish, and Russian were not well-organised and did not closely align with their field of study. Additionally, employers noted that while the language barrier is generally not an issue, they would still prefer to hire native Latvian speakers over those who speak foreign languages. The experts see this recommendation to be fully implemented.

10. Possibility to develop a joint study programme should be considered.

As mentioned in the university's feedback to the given recommendations as LBTU implements studies related to restaurant and hotel management and the studies are unique in Latvia, with an independent and stable number of students, the establishment of a joint study programme was not actualised. The experts see this recommendation to be not implemented.

11. Students need to be encouraged to go to other Latvian HEI to study separate study modules, subjects.

During the assessment visit, it was evident that the students were unaware of this possibility. The experts see this recommendation to be not implemented.

12. The scientific research of students should go more in line with scientific research of academic staff.

As previously outlined in section 1.4.5. of this report: students engage in research pertinent to their field, primarily through the development of their bachelor theses, which has shown a recent trend of yielding scientifically robust results when further explored in collaboration with supervisors and graduates. Notably, the programme's efficacy is underscored by graduates' pursuit of advanced

academic degrees, with several alumni progressing to doctoral studies and contributing to research within the hospitality field. The experts see this recommendation to be fully implemented.

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

The analysis indicates varying degrees of implementation progress across these recommendations, with notable efforts observed in areas such as quality assurance system implementation and academic staff development. However, challenges remain in areas such as stakeholder feedback response mechanisms and collaboration with national and foreign higher education institutions. Notably, while progress has been made in certain areas, further attention is required to address gaps and ensure comprehensive implementation of recommendations across all facets of the study field and programs.

Strengths:

- 1) **Comprehensive Quality Assurance System:** The study field has established an internal quality management system aligned with international standards, ensuring systematic planning, action, verification, and improvement processes.
- 2) **Academic Staff Development Opportunities:** The provision of various professional development opportunities, including attendance at conferences and internal courses, demonstrates a commitment to enhancing teaching staff expertise.
- 3) **Diversified Funding Sources:** The study programme benefits from a diverse range of funding sources, including allocations from the state budget, contributions from individuals, and financing from the European Regional Development Fund, ensuring financial stability and support.

Weaknesses:

- 1) **Limited Stakeholder Feedback Response:** While stakeholder feedback mechanisms exist, such as student course evaluations and employer assessments, there is a lack of structured feedback provision to stakeholders following evaluations, hindering transparency and accountability.
- 2) **Insufficient International Collaboration:** Despite efforts to enhance international competence within the Erasmus+ programme, there is a lack of ongoing international projects directly related to the study field, indicating a need for expanded collaboration with foreign higher education institutions.

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

Overall, there is progress, and LBTU is working on the recommendations; however, there are still recommendations, for example stakeholder feedback mechanisms and international collaboration efforts that require additional attention to achieve full compliance.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

Define Clear KPIs: Define clear and measurable KPIs for the study programme and inform the academic staff involved in its realisation about these KPIs.

Regulate Annual Financial Support for Teachers: Make a university-wide decision to regulate the annual fund available to each teacher for professional, scientific, and teaching activities.

Create an English Course Catalog: Create a "Course Catalog" listing all English courses and the instructors teaching them, clearly indicating the semester in which the courses are offered. Publicly publish a syllabus for each course in English, outlining the course structure and content.
Regulate AI Use in Student Papers: Establish regulations for the use of AI in student papers to maintain academic integrity.
Streamline RPL Procedure: Streamline the RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) procedure to be based on learning outcome-based assessment and reduce the application processing time.
Align Research with Study Field: Ensure research activities support the intended integration of research areas necessary for this study field
Update Study Materials with Latest Research: Ensure that study materials reflect the latest research findings in the field to enhance student learning
Develop Joint Applied Research with Employers: Initiate joint applied research projects with employers and pursue ongoing international projects related to this study field.
Increase Conference Participation: Encourage academic staff to participate more in study field-related international and other conferences to reverse the recent decline in participation.
Strengthen Stakeholder Feedback Mechanisms: Implement a structured feedback mechanism to provide stakeholders with timely and transparent responses following evaluations, fostering trust and engagement.
Enhance International Collaboration: Foster partnerships with foreign higher education institutions to facilitate joint research projects, student exchanges, and collaborative initiatives, enriching the study environment and promoting cross-cultural understanding.

Long-term recommendations

Enhance Quality Management System Involvement: Develop a mechanism for involving study field and study programme level academic staff in the realisation of the LBTU quality management system.
Encourage Joint Publications with International Scientists: Develop joint articles with scientists from abroad to demonstrate the implementation of international collaboration.
Decentralised Budgeting: Allocate separate accounting accounts for each faculty to facilitate cost tracking and decision-making related to programme and study environment improvements
Increase Publications in the Field of Study: Encourage teachers to publish papers related to the field of study by providing additional rewards and establishing a policy that financially rewards papers published in high level journals.
Expand Course Offerings in Foreign Languages: Encourage teachers to teach courses in English by offering fair remuneration.
Promote International Mobility: Organise activities such as an "International Week" where teachers from partner universities and local LBTU teachers give lectures and present their institutions to students, thereby encouraging mobility for both students and teachers.

II - "Restaurant and Hotel Management" ASSESSMENT

II - "Restaurant and Hotel Management" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The professional bachelor study programme "Restaurant and Hotel Management" (42811) (PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management) is developed in compliance with the relevant education standard and the qualification is provided in Appendix 6 "Annex6_Compliance with the national education standard_.pdf" and 7 "Annex 7_Compliance of the Bachelor programme for professional standart_.pdf" of the SAR. More detail analysed under criterion 2.2.1. The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management is in compliance with the study field "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation". According to chapter 3.1.2. of SAR, the content and the title of PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management is related to the study field "Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation". The first part of the name of this study field correspondent with the name of study programme.

2.1.2.

The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management aim is to prepare highly qualified and competitive managers of hospitality companies who have an understanding of the operation of hospitality companies and whose knowledge and competencies enable them to make decisions, plan, and coordinate the implementation of quality hospitality services (SAR, p.67). The graduates receive a Professional Bachelor's Degree in Hospitality Management and the professional qualification "Tourism and Hospitality Service Manager". Tasks within the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management are defined to achieve the goal and produce specialists with competencies outlined in professional standard (Annex 6 (Compliance with professional standard) of SAR and the link to the professional standard: <https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-253.pdf>). Students gain knowledge of management and a deep understanding of the business processes in catering and hospitality companies.

According to SAR p.71 the title in Latvian is "Ēdināšanas un viesnīcu vadība", in English "Restaurant and Hotel Management". From a linguistic point of view "Ēdināšana" is not translated as "Restaurant", it's "Catering", however, the translation of the title in English was changed from "Catering and Hotel Management" to "Restaurant and Hotel Management". During the assessment visit, the expert team got evidence that the title of this study programme is created more for marketing purposes (to attract students) neither to reflect the real content and uniqueness of the study programme. Expert team obtained evidence of the uniqueness of PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management during the assessment visit and also it has been described in the SAR p.72. There is only one study programme in Latvia to educate top-level professionals in the field of hospitality management. However, without a deep introduction in the content of this study programme, it is complicated to get evidence of this uniqueness.

Experts recommended to revise the title of this study programme and arrange with the content and learning outcomes to highlight the uniqueness of the study programme and also to provide correct translation of the title of the study programme English. Based on the current description of the study programme the intended uniqueness is not visible either in title, aim, LOs etc of the study programme

Only the Latvian mode is currently implemented, however, according to SAR p.69. the LBTU plan to realise full-time studies in English. Also, the implemented part-time mode is fully functional and achieves its intended goals, however, for the last 2 years PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management has had no part-time students.

The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management has a scope of 240 ECTS with a study duration of 4

years for full-time studies and 4 years and 3 months for part-time studies.

The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management corresponds to the education classification code 42811, with the last three numbers (811) standing for Hotel and Restaurant Services according to the classification of Latvian education (Cabinet Regulation No 322), which can be accessed here: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju> (only in Latvian).

Enrollment in the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management necessitates a background in secondary or professional secondary education. The admission process for full-time undergraduate programs, specifically for state-funded positions, is competitive and determined by performance in centralised examinations (CE). Prospective students applying to the programme are required to take CEs in Latvian language, English, mathematics and additional points if CE is in social sciences. The title, code, degree, and professional qualification of the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated, however, learning outcomes, the title of the study programme do not show the uniqueness of it. The expert team got evidence about it also during the assessment visit.

2.1.3.

The previous accreditation of PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management was on June 26, 2013. And according to SAR p. 70, no changes have been made to the parameters of the study programme, only substantive changes based on the recommendations of accreditation experts. According to SAR section 3.1.1. the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management was included in the ESF project No. 8.2.3.0/18/A/009 “Improvement of the Management of the LBTU” (2018-2021) and two leading experts in the field of hospitality from Latvia and Poland evaluated the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management and made recommendations in line with the current trends in the field. The most improvements regarding the content of PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management.

The most significant changes in the content of PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management related to use after 31.12.2024. ECTS, not credit points (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/37967-augstskolu-likums> (in Latvian)). The changes related to the study courses multiply the previous credit point by a factor 1.5 and as a result, the new numeric values are with the decimal point which is not allowed according to the current legislation.

There are no fundamental changes to PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management characteristics. All other changes and improvements are justified.

2.1.4.

According to chapter 3.1.3. of SAR, the results of the employer survey conducted in 2023 prove that 1/3 of graduates work in managerial roles that match their qualifications, another 1/3 in lower-level managerial roles, and the rest work in hospitality-related areas. During the assessment visit meetings with stakeholders and graduates, the expert team got evidence that graduates in general are well prepared and their skills and knowledge correspond with the market needs.

According to SAR Annex 5. “Statistical data on students in the study programme” total 121 students (101 – full-time and 10 – part-time students) in the PBSP “Restaurant and Hotel Management”. Most full-time students (95 total) are state-funded and only 6 are self-funded. The statistics (Annex 5) data about the 1st-year students show that the study programme has only state budget-funded students and the number of students also decline. However, during the assessment visit expert team got evidence that next year the total amount of the budget places will increase from 92 to 100 and it could be enough challenges for the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management not only to enrol enough new students but also to think about the significant activities to decrease the drop-out level of the 1st course students. The statistic (SAR Appendix 5) shows that the last 2 years had a higher number of dropout students and the main reason has been mentioned “by own choice”. During the assessment visit experts team clarified that under “by own choice” students drop out as they understand the aim of this PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management and they are not interested. It

means that LBTU needs to pay more attention and put effort into the work with potential students due to decrease the level of the drop out during the 1st year.

LBTU is planning significantly to increase the level of part-time students in this PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management, however, in the last 3 academic years this study programme has had no part-time students.

During the assessment visit, the expert team got the information that LBTU has a plan to start to offer this study programme also in English, however, the expert team doubts the readiness level of this process, for instance, how students will be attracted (currently the main emphasis is on the submitted European University project, but it is not quite clear if the project is not approved, how it will be implemented), most of the available documents are currently in Latvian, knowledge of English and materials for study courses, etc.

PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management given its curriculum, aims and goals are economically justified. Trends of student numbers are at healthy levels, however with a negative trend over the year and with high drop out level during the last 2 academic years.

2.1.5.

N/a

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

The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management aligns with the " Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation " field, preparing highly qualified and competitive managers of hospitality companies who understand the operation of hospitality companies. The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management, currently available in Latvian, plans to offer an English option and significantly improve and attract more part-time students, however, the last 3 academic years had no part-time students. Reasons for high levels of dropout the 1st-course students include personal reasons, like academic challenges. Despite a negative student number trend, the programme seemed economically justified based on its curriculum and goals,

Strengths:

- 1) The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management complies with education and professional standards.
- 2) Graduates of the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management have good employability opportunities.
- 3) The State is funding several study places in the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Relatively high dropout rates in the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management.
- 2) The title of the study programme in English is used just for marketing purposes not to reflect the real content and precise translation from Latvian.
- 3) Uniqueness of the study programme is not visible either in title, aim or LOs

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management is developed according to the rules and regulations in force in the Republic of Latvia and the decisions of the LBTU. Mandatory topics on civil and

environmental protection are included in the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management: Ecology and Environmental Protection and Labour and Civil Protection (3 CP/ECTS). Based on Annex 9 (Bachelor's study programme of the first cycle of professional higher education "Restaurant and Hotel Management") and syllabi, the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management consists of different courses with different degrees of generalisation and focus. In this sense, the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management offers general and introductory courses enabling the students to understand the basics of the hospitality, tourism, and business fields, develop transferable skills, and speciality courses focusing on the peculiarities of hospitality business and food servicing. Experts agree that the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management content is topical; its courses are interconnected and complementary.

During the assessment visit, experts received feedback from industry representatives about the relevance and necessity of the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management programme. The employers particularly valued the programme's inclusion of more in-depth financial knowledge, which they deemed essential for hospitality sector managers.

According to SAR section 3.2.1, PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management has a significant proportion of food production study courses. However, graduates receive a qualification as "Tourism and Hospitality Service Manager". During the assessment visit, the expert team did not find evidence for the necessity of deep knowledge of food production courses for managers who will work in the tourism industry. For instance, such knowledge could be more relevant for food industry managers.

During the assessment visit, the expert team gets evidence from the stakeholders and graduates about the unique skills of the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management graduates. However, stakeholders and students emphasise the necessity of adding more financial courses in PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management as the graduates receive management qualifications. Even though this PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management is unique, the expert team during the assessment visit did not get specific evidence that this PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management content needs to consist of deep technological study courses, for instance, Food Biochemistry, Technology of Food Preparation, etc.

During the assessment visit, experts gathered evidence about the significant skills and knowledge that graduates of the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management programme acquire, such as a deep understanding of food technological processes and hygiene (SAR Annex 9, Bachelor's study programme of the first cycle of professional higher education 'Restaurant and hotel management '). However, the programme's learning outcomes do not fully reflect these crucial aspects, indicating a need for alignment and improvement.

While the learning outcomes are presented and a formally correct match between programme level and course level learning outcomes is provided, some courses (e.g. production management) could be more aligned with the content-rich way with the learning outcomes or aim of the programme. The number of credit points per subject should be revised - e.g. Production Management and Food Production are 15 ECTS together, but Hotel Service Management is 6 ECTS. However, servicing is the primary process in the Hospitality sector.

Considering that one of the study languages of PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management is English, all the course descriptions are also available in English. Although the mandatory material mentioned in the course programmes mainly contains literature in English, some problems occur: 1) Material in English needs to be updated (eg. Information Technology in Hospitality, Hospitality Business Management, Technological Project of Catering Establishment, Hygiene Management in Hospitality, Technology of Food Preparation, Production Management); 2) among mandatory material, there is no literature in English, or this is not covering the course content (e.g. Food Production, Introduction to Research, Hygiene Management in Hospitality) fully. Based on the provided course descriptions, the LBTU is not fully prepared to teach PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management in English.

The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management complies with the national regulations (state educational standard (SAR Annex 6 "Compliance with the national standard") and professional

standards "Profesijas standarts turisma pakalpojumi turisma pakalpojumu vaditaja profesionalas kvalifikacijas prasibas" (SAR, Annex 7 "Compliance professional standard").

2.2.2.

NA

2.2.3.

Based on the information provided in the course descriptions (study courses.zip) and given by the students during the assessment visit, the variety of study methods is good, and the chosen methods support the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Study methods like laboratory and practical work, presentations, discussions, company visits etc were mentioned. The expert team recognises that the study methods enable students to gain theoretical knowledge and achieve practical skills necessary in the labour market. Practical cases, seminar topics, company visits and other methods bring students into the company's cases.

Student-centeredness is one of the main principles of learning outcome-based studies, but it should be reflected much wider than just in learning outcomes. According to the onsite interviews, in this PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management, the academic staff understands how to build up and implement student-centred studies and teaching. Additionally, supportive services (SAR, p. 81) are provided for the students to enable them to more efficiently achieve the intended learning outcomes, e.g., consultancy times.

However, it's important to note that the structure and content of the have the potential for further enhancement in terms of a student-centred view.

2.2.4.

There are five different courses/internships in the study programme (Annex 9. Bachelor's study programme of the first cycle of professional higher education "Restaurant and hotel management): 1) Introduction in Hospitality (3 CP), 2) Introduction Practice in Hospitality Enterprises (6 CP), 3) Guest Accommodation Service (6 CP), 4) Restaurant and Catering Service (6 CP) and 5) Hospitality Business Management (9 CP), in total 30 credit points and divided between study semesters.

The internships are organised according to the study description of each internship and the general document "LBTU Regulations on the Procedure for Organising Traineeships." (https://mans.lbtu.lv/sites/default/files/2022-12/LBTU_Praksu_organizšanas_nolikums_2022_EN.pdf)

Due to the conducted interview with the students, while students are encouraged to secure their own internships, they can rely on the study programme director for assistance. The director is always ready to offer possibilities from the university side, including companies with which they have previous collaborations or contracts. Students are also permitted to intern at their workplace. All interviewed students confirmed that they were required to submit a report at the end of their internship, ensuring a reflective learning process.

Employer representatives also confirmed during the onsite visit that they are willing to accept the students from this PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management for internships in their companies because employees are always needed. It is the student's responsibility to introduce the tasks and aims of the internship to the supervisor.

Students, employers, and graduates found that the internships should be longer because at least 2-3 weeks are needed to settle in, and only then the interns start working individually and bring some benefits to the employers. Students and graduates also stated that it was pretty easy to find an internship place, if you had some experience in the field, but if not, then the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management director helped and everyone found an internship place in the study field.

In analysing the internship descriptions, some improvement areas should be mentioned: 1) Hospitality Business Management Internship has more than 20 learning outcomes which is too many for 9 ECTS and many of those are not assessed if to base on the assessment criteria; 2) In the Guest

Accommodation Service Internship description in the course content section only the analyses of different hospitality company functions are mentioned, but no precise tasks for the interns are provided, although the 30% of the final grade is given for the development of individual task. 3) Although the Introduction in Hospitality is marked in the study programme as an internship, due to the description, it is a lecture with some practical parts such as company visits and simulations. By definition, an internship is a study activity in an actual workplace. 4) concerning all internships, the assessment criteria are formal (e.g. 1. Fully attended traineeship, in accordance with the traineeship agreement, for four weeks; 2. An evaluation by the traineeship supervisor (from the company); 3. Submission and presentation of the placement report.) and do not show whether the learning outcomes are achieved or not.

2.2.5.

NA

2.2.6. At the end of the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management, students must produce a Bachelor Thesis on a topical issue in the food service, guest accommodation service, economics, or tourism industry, and the Bachelor Thesis is publicly defended at the State Examination Commission. Learning outcomes that are evaluated are research skills, working with literature and internet sources, and the ability to find the relevant topic in the field. The final thesis should follow the instructions described in the guidelines produced for the study field. (SAR section 3.2.6. and Annex "Study courses").

The final theses were reviewed by the employers and also employers are participating during the defence of Bachelor Thesis.

Some examples of topics for the final thesis are provided in chapter 3.2.6. of SAR. Also, in 2023, a graduate of the study year 2022/2023 participated in the final thesis competition organised by the Latvian Restaurant Association with the topic "LEAN approach to rationalisation of the service process in restaurant 'X'" and won the 1st prize.

Based on the assessment, the final theses topics chosen by students are relevant to the field of study and demonstrate high quality. This confirms that the students have successfully achieved the desired study outcomes and are aligned with the study programme. The SAR outlines the comprehensive support provided to students throughout their studies, including various study courses and internships integrated into the final thesis process.

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

The evaluated PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management complies with national and professional standards and is topical; however, the aim and learning outcomes do not fully comply with the content of the study programme. The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management has a large portion of food technological study courses, which doubts the importance of such kinds of technical courses for future managers in the tourism and hospitality industries.

Strengths:

- 1) PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management is topical and important for industry and complies with national and professional standards
- 2) Study methods support the student-centred study approach
- 3) The topics of the final thesis are relevant with the study programme and industry representatives are involved in the process of reviewing the theses.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The aim and learning outcomes of this PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management does not fully reflect the content.
- 2) Too much food production study courses for the next generation of tourism industry managers
- 3) Proportion between the importance of the course for the industry and the amount of provided CP is not always correlated.
- 4) The length per internship is too short.
- 5) The descriptions of internships do not correctly open the content, aim and expected tasks and learning outcomes of those internships.
- 6) Study field is not prepared to teach in English, because the study material (obligatory literature) in English is not covering the material needed to achieve expected learning outcomes and/ or is outdated.

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.

According to SAR, pg. 87 - 88, the implementation of the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management is ensured by various academic bodies, including the dean, Methodological Commission, head of the study field, and director of the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management. This demonstrates a structured approach to study provision, ensuring that the necessary administrative support is in place for effective implementation. The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management has diverse methodological and informational support available at the LBTU Fundamental Library and PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management implementation locations across faculties.

The availability of diverse databases, electronic resources, and specialised literature accessible to students for research purposes indicates adequate scientific provision to support academic endeavours within the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management (SAR, pg. 88).

The informative provision available to students includes access to the LBTU Information System, e-studies, e-learning environments, and the LBTU Fundamental Library. Students have access to a wide range of databases, e-journals, e-books, and internet resources relevant to the study program. The Electronic Catalogue of LBTU Fundamental Library and access to databases outside the LBTU network further enhance informative provision (SAR, p. 88).

Modern methodological, informational, and material-technical provisions, including room equipment and laboratory facilities necessary for effective study implementation can be highlighted. The study process is supported by well-equipped laboratories across various faculties of LBTU, providing students with practical learning experiences aligned with the study program. These facilities include specific areas such as (SAR, p. 88 - 89): (1) Food Technology Laboratory: Equipped to meet the requirements of food service companies, facilitating practical work related to technology of food preparation, ethnic cuisine, desserts, wine culture, and production and hygiene management in hospitality. (2) Food Biochemistry Laboratory: Supporting laboratory work related to the Food Biochemistry course, providing students with insights into structural changes of nutrients under various technological processes. (3) Sensor Evaluation Laboratory: Equipped with a FIZZ portable

system for conducting sensor tests and interpreting data, enhancing students' understanding of sensory evaluation within the food production context. (4) Microbiology Laboratory: Equipped with microscopes, colony counters, incubators, and other necessary equipment for implementing the microbiology part of the Hygiene Management in Hospitality course. The study programme benefits from computer classrooms equipped with necessary technological resources for practical classes (i.e. the computer classroom at the LPTF Food Institute features the R-keeper computer system, facilitating practical classes for several study courses such as Introduction to Research, Information Technology in Hospitality, Hygiene Management in Hospitality, Nutrition, and Hotel Services Management). Pilot plants are available for both animal and herbal products, providing students with hands-on experience in food production. These include: Pilot plants for animal products (milk, meat, and fish) and herbal products (berries, vegetables, fruits, cereals), where students implement the Food Production course and learn about quality raw materials for catering services. Facilities like the FEIT computer classroom support specific study courses such as Business Data Statistical Analysis. These classrooms are equipped to facilitate theoretical and practical aspects of the curriculum. Centralised distribution of financial resources ensures the necessary informative, material and technical means for the smooth implementation of the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management (as confirmed in interviews).

2.3.2.

NA

2.3.3.

Various funding sources support the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management, including LR state budget funds, funds from natural persons, funds from scientific research work, and ERDF financing (SAR, p. 90 - 91). This demonstrates a diversified approach to funding, ensuring financial support from multiple sources.

The distribution of funding, as approved by the LBTU Senate, indicates a strategic allocation of resources to support various aspects of the study program, including salaries, scholarships, goods and services, and capital formation (SAR, p. 90 - 91) Allocation of funds for infrastructure repair and material improvements also underscores a focus on enhancing material and technical provision necessary for effective study implementation.

A detailed calculation of the required number of students to ensure the profitability of the study process is provided. By determining the necessary funding for teaching staff salaries and considering the workload required for study implementation, the study programme aims to maintain a sufficient number of students to cover costs and ensure profitability. Instances where the number of part-time students fell below the minimum required are acknowledged, but the study process remained unaffected (SAR, p. 92).

Funding distribution approved by the LBTU Senate includes provisions for structural development, such as infrastructure improvements and material enhancements, contributing to ongoing programme development. Future plans to start the study programme in English indicate a forward-looking approach to programme development and expansion to meet evolving needs and market demands.

According to SAR (p. 92) the total academic workload for one study year is determined to be approximately 5796.59 hours. This workload includes lectures, practical/laboratory work, seminars, correction of study work, exams, and tests. Based on the workload, the required number of workloads for implementing study work during the study year is calculated for different teaching positions:

-Professor: 900 hours

-Associate professor: 920 hours

-Assistant professor: 940 hours

-Lecturer/assistant/non-elected lecturer: 960 hours

Using an average workload of 940 hours for an assistant professor, the required number of workloads for implementing study work during the study year is approximately 6.17 workloads. The necessary funding for teaching staff salary for one study year is calculated based on this workload.

For example, if the salary per workload is 1124 EUR:

Funding for Teaching Staff Salary = 1124 EUR/workload × 6.17 workloads × 12 months × 1.2359 EUR ≈ 102,852.78 EUR.

To cover the costs of the study programme and ensure profitability, it's determined that the number of students comprising 15 groups must be 75, with a minimum of 6 students per group.

Therefore, the study programme requires a minimum of 75 students to ensure profitability, calculated based on workload requirements and the associated costs for teaching staff salaries and other expenses. This is ensured regardless of the trend of declining student numbers (personal calculation + SAR, pg. 77, p. 93). In 2012/2013 there were 184 full time students and in 2023/2024 there were 103 full time students. There is an obvious decline in the number of part-time students as well (SAR, p. 77, Table 3). Constant decline in student numbers raise a question of sustainability of the study programme and study field in general.

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

The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management at LBTU benefits from comprehensive methodological and informational support, including access to diverse databases and electronic resources. Additionally, modern material and technical provisions, such as well-equipped laboratories and computer classrooms across faculties, ensure effective implementation of the program, supported by centralised distribution of financial resources.

The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management effectively utilises funding from various sources, ensures profitability through strategic enrollment planning, and facilitates ongoing programme development to meet the needs of students and stakeholders.

Strengths:

- 1) Diverse methodological and informational support available at the Fundamental Library and study programme implementation locations.
- 2) Access to comprehensive databases, electronic resources, and specialised literature for research purposes.
- 3) Well-equipped laboratories across faculties providing practical learning experiences aligned with study programs, including Food Technology, Biochemistry, Sensor Evaluation, and Microbiology.
- 4) Computer classrooms equipped with necessary technological resources for practical classes, facilitating theoretical and practical aspects of the curriculum.
- 5) Pilot plants for both animal and herbal products, offering hands-on experience in food production and quality control.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Potential challenges exist related to declining student numbers, which may impact resource allocation and program sustainability.

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 LBTU provides all necessary material, informational, and technical resources, ensures an appropriate budget on an annual basis for the same, and takes care to ensure that they are used in an appropriate manner.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

By reviewing the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management and the curriculum vitae of the teacher (Annex for Staff CV), the alignment between the teacher's chosen field and interests and the course they are engaged in or delivering has been recognized. This PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management is highly interdisciplinary, and as such, the qualifications of the teachers delivering it reflect that. The majority of the engaged teachers come from the field of social sciences, particularly economics (over 25%) as confirmed during interviews.

So, the qualifications of the teaching staff involved in the first cycle professional higher education bachelor study programme "Restaurant and Hotel Management" adhere to the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia and the LBTU Regulations on Academic Positions.

Assessments of scientific and pedagogical qualifications are conducted periodically, ensuring that the teaching staff is equipped to deliver high-quality education (SAR, p. 93). Furthermore, ongoing professional development opportunities, such as participation in courses, seminars, and conferences, are provided to enhance teaching staff's skills and keep them updated with the latest trends and methodologies.

A significant portion of the teaching staff possesses a high level of English proficiency, essential for the future implementation of the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management in English. Those requiring improvement in English actively work on enhancing their language skills, demonstrating a commitment to meeting programme requirements (SAR, pg. 94).

Teaching staff integrate technology into the study process, utilising e-learning platforms and acquiring knowledge of information technologies relevant to their field. This integration enhances the quality of education and aligns with modern teaching practices as confirmed during interview with teachers.

Moreover, opportunities for teaching staff to engage with the professional environment through internships in various companies ensure they remain attuned to industry trends and practices, benefiting the study programme's outcomes.

2.4.2.

The LBTU ensures stability in the composition of teaching staff for the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management, despite fluctuations in numbers, by integrating industry professionals and adhering to regulatory requirements. Fluctuations are managed through factors such as part-time engagement, combining pedagogical and scientific work, and adapting to changes in study plans as confirmed during interviews. The institution's personnel policy, implemented in 2023, further strengthens effective management practices for maintaining programme quality and compliance. What's advantageous is the fact that this PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management involves teachers from several different faculties of this university, ensuring consistency in programme implementation. Given the workload of teachers, adequate substitution can always be ensured if needed. It has been observed that the university takes care of the overall workload of individual teachers.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.

Most of the published papers are not much related to this field of study (see annex: Staff Publications list.xlsx and Annex 5_Publications and artistic creative activities.pdf). Recognized works are from the fields of nutrition, food and diet, mathematics, education, and sustainable development, with very few from tourism and almost none from the field of hospitality. Teachers jointly published more than 680 papers, or 4-5 papers per teacher. The most popular indexing databases are Scopus and Web of Science. Teachers mostly publish papers in co-authorship. Only a few of them have published independent scientific papers (less than 10).

Most of the lecturers of this study programme have only experiences as lecturers or teachers and their work experience from industry is quite small. Therefore it is even more important to collaborate with the industry to bring as much knowledge and practical skills to the students as possible. Involvement of the guest lecturers from the industry practitioners, practical tasks and mentors for the students etc are just some possibilities to give students top-notch skills and knowledge expected from professional studies.

2.4.5.

The successful implementation of any study programme relies heavily on the collaborative efforts of its teaching staff. This rings particularly true for the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management, where a diverse array of expertise converges to prepare students for the dynamic hospitality industry. Evaluating the efficacy of teaching staff cooperation unveils a multifaceted landscape, marked by both commendable achievements and areas ripe for improvement. Horizontal collaboration, which entails cooperation among teaching staff within and across departments, serves as a cornerstone for programme cohesion and interdisciplinary synergy. The Hospitality Department emerges as a prime example of effective horizontal collaboration, where teaching staff exhibit a unified direction and shared understanding of programme objectives. By actively supervising bachelor theses and engaging in annual meetings with the State Examination Commission, teaching staff capitalise on valuable insights to refine their pedagogical approaches and align curriculum content with industry demands. (SAR, p. 97)

However, the panorama of horizontal collaboration is not without its shadows (SAR, p. 97). As per the same source, teaching staff hailing from the Faculty of Economics and Society Development encounter challenges in fully integrating theoretical economics courses with the practical intricacies of hospitality management. The pronounced turnover within this academic cohort further exacerbates this issue, underscoring the importance of continuity and specialised training to bridge disciplinary divides. Conversely, vibrant collaboration thrives among teaching staff specialising in foreign languages, psychology, accounting, and environmental studies. This cross-pollination of expertise enriches the educational experience by infusing diverse perspectives and nurturing holistic skill development among students. Vertical integration, which encompasses cooperation between academic leadership and teaching staff, plays a pivotal role in fostering programme cohesion and addressing systemic challenges. At the helm of this endeavour are the dean and vice-dean of the programme, who actively engage in problem-solving and offer unwavering support to teaching staff. This top-down approach not only streamlines administrative processes but also cultivates a culture of collaboration and mutual respect within the academic community. Teachers have confirmed their availability.

Moreover, the involvement of the vice-rector for Studies and the Study Centre further fortifies vertical integration, ensuring seamless coordination between programme objectives and institutional priorities (SAR, p. 97). Through concerted efforts and open communication channels, teaching staff feel empowered to navigate complex academic landscapes and enact positive change.

Recognizing the paramount importance of fostering a sense of ownership and belonging among teaching staff, the institution orchestrates annual meetings that serve as a nexus for engagement and dialogue (SAR, p. 97). These gatherings, held at the onset of each academic year, offer a

platform for industry professionals to share insights and expectations, thereby bridging the gap between academia and real-world practice. By aligning programme goals with industry demands, teaching staff gain a deeper appreciation for their role as educators and industry ambassadors, galvanising collective efforts towards programme excellence.

These meetings facilitate immersive experiences, such as guided tours of the programme's material-technical infrastructure, further cementing teaching staff's connection to the programme's mission and vision. As an annual tradition, these gatherings foster a sense of camaraderie and purpose, catalysing collaborative endeavours that transcend disciplinary boundaries.

Despite the commendable strides in promoting teaching staff cooperation, challenges loom on the horizon. Chief among these concerns is the burgeoning student-to-teacher ratio (SAR, p. 97), which threatens to compromise the quality of practical skill acquisition. As the programme grapples with expanding enrollment and evolving pedagogical demands, proactive solutions are imperative to safeguarding the integrity of the learning experience. By exploring innovative instructional models and optimising resource allocation, the institution can navigate this demographic shift without sacrificing educational efficacy.

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

The teaching staff qualifications in the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management align with regulatory requirements, enabling the achievement of programme aims. Ongoing professional development, language proficiency improvement, and integration of technology ensure high-quality education delivery and alignment with industry standards.

The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management benefits from the higher education institution's strategic approach to maintaining teaching staff stability, integrating industry professionals and adhering to regulations. The programme's interdisciplinary nature, drawing on teachers from various faculties, ensures consistency, while the institution's proactive approach to workload management facilitates seamless substitution, thus upholding teaching quality and teacher well-being.

The PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management stands as a testament to the transformative power of collaborative synergy among teaching staff. While formidable challenges persist, the programme's unwavering commitment to fostering a culture of cooperation and dialogue bodes well for its continued success. Through collective efforts and a shared vision, teaching staff can propel the programme to new heights of excellence, equipping students with the skills and knowledge to thrive in an ever-evolving hospitality landscape.

Strengths:

- 1) alignment between the teacher's chosen field and interests and the course they are engaged in
- 2) collaborative efforts of teaching staff that ensures programme delivery
- 3) good vertical cooperation in the institution

Weaknesses:

- 1) Teachers lack experience from the industry.

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: Partially compliant

The expert team considers that there is sufficient evidence to support the claim that the qualification of the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management teaching staff fully meets the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements defined in the relevant legal acts, but no applied research and (international) projects.

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

Annex 6 Compilation to the national education standard confirms that the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 305 (13.05.2023.)

- 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 7 Compliance standard profession confirms that the PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management is compliant with Professional Standard "Tourism and Hospitality service manager" (07.06.2023.)

- 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: Partially compliant

Attached study course descriptions Study courses.zip are prepared in Latvian and English. Descriptions comply with regulations set forth in Law on Higher Education Institutions, but mentioned materials in English are outdated or missing at all.

- 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 provided diploma sample Diploma _and_supplement_EN.pdf complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus" (16.04.2013.).

- 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

Attached resumes Staff CV_EN.zip and confirmation letter LBTU apliecinajums_studiju virzienam_Viesnicu un restoranu serviss_EN.docx verifies that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet Regulation No. 157 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi" (08.03.2022.)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached resumes of staff Staff CV_EN.zip and confirmation LBTU apliecinajums_studiju virzienam_Viesnicu un restoranu serviss_EN_2.docx verifies that language proficiency in English is at least B2 - level

- 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

Sample of attached study agreement 18_Study_Agreement_LV_EN_2023.pdf complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi" (23.01.2007.)

- 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

Attached contract Vienosanas_LBTU_Turiba_abpuseja_Edinataji_EN.docx confirms that the institution provides the possibility to continue studies within professional bachelor programme "Tourism and Hospitality Business Management" in "Turiba University" Ltd

- 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

Confirmation LBTU apliecinajums_studiju virzienam_Viesnicu un restoranu serviss_EN.docx states, that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the 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

PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management complies with regulatory enactments and requirements. However, there are issues with course descriptions in English that LBTU should address, but it doesn't affect the overall requirement assessment.

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

PBSP Restaurant and Hotel Management demonstrates significant strengths, including its integration of the restaurant industry and food servicing, alignment with national and professional standards, and the involvement of qualified teaching staff, including those from the industry. The programme benefits from strong cooperation between the programme director, teaching staff, and students, as well as active partnerships with industry associations and enterprises. Additionally, the programme offers robust material and technical support, comprehensive library services, and well-equipped laboratories, which enhance the practical learning experience. The programme's high score in outgoing mobility and good employability opportunities for graduates are also noteworthy.

However, there are areas needing improvement. The programme faces challenges in providing part-time and English-language options, partly due to a lack of part-time student intake and insufficient study materials in English. The programme also has a small number of foreign teaching staff and high dropout rates. Internal quality indicators are limited to the university and faculty levels, not extending to the study programme itself. Additionally, the learning outcomes and programme aim do not fully reflect the content, and there is an imbalance between the importance of certain courses and the credits assigned to them. Internships are too short and lack clear descriptions of their content, aim, tasks, and learning outcomes. Moreover, the programme is not fully prepared to teach in English due to outdated and insufficient obligatory literature, and there is an insufficient number of published scientific papers in the field of study.

This study programme applies the most important requirements and most of the found shortages should be easy to eliminate. Addressing these weaknesses will enhance the overall quality and sustainability of the programme, ensuring it continues to meet the needs of students and the industry.

Strengths:

- 1) The uniqueness of the study programme is that it integrates the restaurant industry and food

servicing. It is topical and essential for the industry and complies with national and professional standards;

- 2) Qualified teaching staff, including teaching staff from industry and collaborative efforts of teaching staff that ensure programme delivery;
- 3) Good cooperation and communication between the programme director, teaching staff and students;
- 4) Study-supportive material and technical support for the implementation of studies;
- 5) Active cooperation with industry associations, industry enterprises, institutions, graduates;
- 6) Having the State budget places and those are filled, support from the Ministry of Agriculture;
- 7) A high score in outgoing mobility of students and teaching staff;
- 8) Graduates of the study programme have good employability opportunities;
- 9) Study methods support the student-centred study approach;
- 10) The final thesis topics are relevant to the study programme, and industry representatives are involved in reviewing the theses;
- 11) Diverse methodological and informational support available concerning the library services;
- 12) Access to comprehensive databases, electronic resources, and specialised literature for research purposes;
- 13) Well-equipped laboratories and computer classes across faculties provide practical learning experiences aligned with the study programme.

Weaknesses:

- 1) A small number of foreign teaching staff;
- 2) No candidates for part-time studies and potential challenges related to declining student numbers may impact resource allocation and programme sustainability;
- 3) Internal quality indicators are only for the university and faculty but not for the study programme;
- 4) Relatively high dropout rates in the study programme;
- 5) Learning outcomes do not show the uniqueness of this study programme;
- 6) This study programme's aim and learning outcomes do not fully reflect the content;
- 7) Too many food production study courses for the next generation of tourism industry managers;
- 8) The proportion between the course's importance to the industry and the amount of provided CP is not always correlated;
- 9) The length per internship is too short;
- 10) The descriptions of internships do not correctly open the content, aim, expected tasks and learning outcomes of those internships.
- 11) Not prepared to teach in English because the study material (obligatory literature) in English does not cover the material needed to achieve expected learning outcomes and is outdated;

Evaluation of the study programme "Restaurant and Hotel Management"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Restaurant and Hotel Management"

Short-term recommendations

Attract Part-Time Students: Develop strategies to attract candidates for part-time studies to address potential challenges related to declining student numbers and ensure programme sustainability.

Use social media to attract students. Intensive promotion of this study programme throughout Latvia is necessary, with a particular focus on high schools offering similar programmes and those with a general focus. Utilising social media platforms, especially Instagram and TikTok, popular among young people, for promotion is crucial. Creating short video clips, showcasing local products prepared in laboratories (we visited during field visits) and similar, would be beneficial. Additionally, maintaining a constant presence across various media channels is essential for effective promotion

Establish Programme-Level Quality Indicators: Develop and implement internal quality indicators specifically for the study programme, in addition to those at the university and faculty levels.

Highlight Programme Uniqueness in Learning Outcomes: Revise the learning outcomes to clearly demonstrate the uniqueness of the study programme, ensuring they reflect the specific strengths and focus areas of the programme

Align Programme title, Aim and Learning Outcomes with Content: Adjust the programme's title, aim and learning outcomes to more accurately reflect the content of the study programme.

Balance Course Content: Reevaluate the study programme to ensure an appropriate balance between food production study courses and other essential courses for future tourism industry managers. Even some deep food production study courses could be replaced with more useful courses for the target group.

Adjust Course Credits: Review and adjust the proportion of credits (CP) assigned to courses to better correlate with their importance to the industry. 8. Extend Internship Length: Increase the duration of internships to provide students with more comprehensive practical experiences.

Enhance Internship Descriptions: Improve the descriptions of internships to clearly articulate the content, aim, expected tasks, and learning outcomes, providing better guidance to students and industry partners.

Update and Expand English Study Materials: Ensure that obligatory literature and study materials in English are up-to-date and comprehensive enough to cover the material needed to achieve expected learning outcomes.

To provide the correct translation of the study programme in English to reflect the uniqueness and content of the study content.

Long-term recommendations

Increase Foreign Teaching Staff: Actively recruit and hire more foreign teaching staff to diversify the academic perspectives and expertise within the programme.

Reduce Dropout Rates: Implement targeted initiatives to identify the reasons for high dropout rates and develop support mechanisms to retain students throughout the programme.

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

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Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:	Fully compliant		LBTU Quality management manual and LBTU has "Regulations on study programme development, approval and amendment at LBTU" the Senate's decision No. 11-133, October 11, 2023
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)		Partially compliant	Good involvement of academic staff in publishing and conferences and successful involvement of students into the research activities, but number of the field specific applied research and (international) projects is small.
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.	Fully compliant		LBTU cooperates with different stakeholders from Latvia and from abroad and different activities undertaken clearly contribute to the achievement of the aims of the study field.
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	Overall, there is progress, and LBTU is working on the recommendations; however, there are still recommendations, for example stakeholder feedback mechanisms and international collaboration efforts that require additional attention to achieve full compliance.

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)

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Restaurant and Hotel Management (42811)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

No dissenting opinions