

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Riga Technical University

Study field: Education and Pedagogy

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

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The expert group concluded that the study field “Education and Pedagogy” at Riga Technical University (RTU) is strategically managed, coherent across study cycles, and aligned with both RTU’s Strategic Plan 2023–2027 and national development priorities. The management structure is clear, participatory, and supported by qualified administrative and technical staff. Quality assurance mechanisms are well established, including internal audits, performance indicators, digital monitoring tools (Power BI, ORTUS), feedback systems, and academic integrity policies. Overall, the study programmes are transparent in admission, assessment, and recognition procedures, and are supported by a robust infrastructure and modern digital platforms such as Moodle and international databases.

Positive aspects identified include:

- Strategic alignment of the field and study programmes with national priorities and labour market needs, particularly addressing teacher shortages in STEM, Latvian language, and special education.
- Strong academic staff with high research activity and international project participation, including Erasmus+, Nordplus, and Latvian Council of Science projects.
- Well-resourced regional academies (RTU LA and RTU RA) providing modern learning environments, specialized centers for pedagogy, speech therapy, and special education, and flexible study programme structures.
- Effective implementation of quality assurance policies and evidence-based decision-making through annual self-assessments, SWOT analyses, and data-driven monitoring.
- Strong collaboration between staff, students, and employers, promoting engagement, curriculum development, and research integration.
- Progress in internationalisation, student mobility, and development-oriented projects.
- Successful implementation of previous accreditation recommendations, including improved learning environments, increased PhD holder numbers, and strengthened cooperation with educational institutions.

Areas for improvement include:

- Ongoing consolidation and integration of regional academies (RA and LA), with the full rollout of the Quality Management System still in progress.
- Uneven internationalisation and research visibility across study programmes, with excellence relying heavily on individual researchers rather than coordinated institutional strategies.
- Need for further development of foreign language proficiency among staff and students to enhance international collaboration.
- Enhanced student participation in mobility and research projects, particularly for short-cycle study programmes.
- Continuous mapping of study programme and course learning outcomes to ensure alignment and prevent recurrence of gaps.
- Adjustment of student recruitment and group formation methods at the regional academies to improve specialization opportunities.
- Strengthening support for academic staff research, including workload allocation and seed funding for publications and projects.

Overall, the expert group determined that the study field and associated study programmes are relevant, and generally strong, demonstrating strategic alignment, high-quality governance, and responsiveness to national and regional needs. While certain areas require ongoing development (particularly internationalisation, consolidation of regional units, and student engagement in

research) the study field exhibits a sustainable framework for continued high-quality educational provision and research activity in Latvia.

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1. The aims of the study field Education and Pedagogy are explicitly stated and consistent with RTU's Strategy 2023-2027, which emphasises high-quality education, innovation, research excellence, and institutional sustainability (SAR, pp. 9-10, 20-23). The study field seeks to prepare competent, creative, and ethically responsible teachers capable of integrating digital technologies and evidence-based practices into learning (SAR, pp. 22-24, 45). These aims correspond to Latvia's Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 and National Development Plan 2021-2027, ensuring alignment with national priorities (SAR, pp. 22-23, 45-46).

The incorporation of Liepāja Academy (2024) and Rēzekne Academy (2025) broadened RTU's capacity and geographical reach, allowing for cross-disciplinary cooperation between pedagogy, engineering, and ICT (SAR, pp. 6-7, 25-26, 55). The SAR highlights opportunities to further integrate educational-technology research into study programme design and teaching practice (SAR, p. 25, 80).

The study field and the included study programmes fully comply with RTU's main strategic development directions, as defined in the four institutional pillars — Quality Studies, Excellent Science, Sustainable Innovation, and Institutional Excellence. Through Quality Studies, the field ensures competence-based, inclusive, and technology-enhanced education that prepares specialists for Latvia's and Europe's labour markets. In line with Excellent Science, the field integrates pedagogical research and doctoral studies in Educational Sciences, strengthening RTU's research capacity in social sciences. The focus on Sustainable Innovation is reflected in the use of digital learning tools, blended learning formats, and partnerships with schools, municipalities, and education technology enterprises. Finally, Institutional Excellence is pursued through quality assurance mechanisms, stakeholder feedback systems, and cooperation across RTU's regional units. The eight study programmes - from short-cycle to doctoral level - form a vertically coherent system (SAR, pp. 21-22). However, experts note the progression between bachelor's and master's studies could be clarified to better demonstrate increasing academic depth and research orientation. Experts identified that while the Self-Assessment Report presents a coherent vertical structure of the study field (short-cycle to doctoral level), it does not explicitly describe how competencies and research skills evolve from bachelor's to master's studies. Overall, the study field's objectives are clearly defined, attainable, and well integrated into RTU's strategic development framework.

1.1.2. RTU has conducted a comprehensive SWOT analysis, discussed by the Study Field Committee (SFC) with participation of study programme directors, students, and external stakeholders (SAR, pp. 23-25, 40-42). It underpins the Study Field Development Plan 2025-2030, which focuses on (1) quality assurance and (2) methodological & scientific development (SAR, p. 23, 43). Strengths - qualified academic staff, extensive collaboration with schools and municipalities, active student involvement, and growing research activity - are substantiated (SAR, p. 24, 70-72). Weaknesses such as limited internationalisation and uneven digital-pedagogy integration are acknowledged (SAR, p. 25, 74-76).

Opportunities include strengthening cooperation with municipalities and international partners, while threats involve demographic decline and competition for teacher-training applicants (SAR, p. 25, 45, 88). Importantly, the SWOT analysis feeds into RTU's annual quality reports and informs faculty

action plans (SAR, pp. 40-45). The experts note that further integration of internal-communication mechanisms between central and regional structures would enhance monitoring of these development goals. Overall, the SWOT process is systematic, realistic, and effectively incorporated into RTU's institutional plans.

1.1.3. Management responsibilities are clearly distributed across three levels – university, faculty/academy, and programme (SAR, pp. 10-13, 26-28, 40-42). The SFC functions as the coordinating body ensuring coherence among implementation places (SAR, pp. 26-27). It includes representatives of employers, students, and regional administrators, ensuring participatory governance. Decision-making is evidence-based and linked to the RTU Internal Quality System, which operates on the PDCA cycle (SAR, pp. 37-45).

Administrative and technical support is sufficient: study-process coordinators, IT specialists, and financial administrators provide assistance at all sites (SAR, pp. 27-28, 53-58). Facilities meet modern pedagogical requirements – interactive classrooms, computer labs, and digital learning environments (SAR, pp. 53-61). Library and e-resource access are unified through RTU's digital library (SAR, pp. 61-63). During the on-site visit, staff confirmed this assessment, noting that administrative and technical support is responsive, well-organised, and facilitates smooth programme management. Nevertheless, experts observe transitional overlaps between RTU central and regional structures due to the ongoing integration of Liepāja and Rēzekne Academies (SAR, pp. 54-56). A unified coordination mechanism for pedagogical programmes would improve consistency and workload balance.

To further consolidate organisational and communication procedures between RTU's central structure and the regional academies in Liepāja and Rēzekne, it is important to strengthen coordination mechanisms to ensure consistent study programme delivery across all locations. As the integration of regional academies is still ongoing, differences in administrative practices and information flow may affect uniform implementation of regulations and quality standards. Clearer division of responsibilities, regular coordination meetings, and standardized reporting and communication procedures would support efficient decision-making, transparency, and consistent academic quality throughout the study programmes.

1.1.4. RTU's Admission Regulations are approved annually by the Senate and comply with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Cabinet Regulation No. 846 (SAR, pp. 28-29, 91-92). Admission criteria are publicly available and identical across implementation places. Procedures for the recognition of prior formal and non-formal learning are defined in the Regulation on Recognition of Learning Outcomes (2019) (Internal_regulations.zip). The system allows acknowledgment of relevant professional experience, promoting lifelong learning (SAR, pp. 92-93). Although used infrequently, the procedure has been applied in practice to recognise competencies gained through professional experience as equivalent to certain practical study components, demonstrating that the system functions effectively when utilised and provides flexible pathways for students.

Students and graduates indicated that they are well informed about these mechanisms, and employers recognised their flexibility. Digital application and credit-transfer systems ensure transparency (SAR, pp. 94-95). Still, harmonisation of ECTS equivalence across regional academies remains a priority, as the recent integration of RTU LA and RTU RA revealed differences in how student workload per credit, course content and assessment depth, legacy CP-to-ECTS conversions, and the implementation of equivalent modules were previously interpreted and applied, requiring continued alignment to ensure consistent academic standards across all implementation sites. Overall, RTU's admission and recognition framework is well-established, transparent, and effective.

1.1.5. Student assessment is governed by the Regulation on the Assessment of Learning Outcomes (2022) and the Regulation on Final Examinations (2021) (SAR, pp. 32-33). These define formative

and summative approaches, grade scales, and appeals (SAR, pp. 33-34). Digital tools such as Moodle and MS Teams support online feedback and monitoring (SAR, p. 34, 98-99). Periodic reviews confirm that assessment results align with study programme learning outcomes, as evidenced by the systematic analysis of course-level assessment data, the mapping of learning outcomes to examination components, and the review of final theses and study course descriptions conducted by programme councils and quality assurance units.

Nevertheless, RTU identifies variation in course-level specificity of assessment criteria, for instance, where some course descriptions outline only general assessment methods without clear evaluation criteria or weighting of tasks, while others provide detailed guidance; periodic reviews also noted inconsistencies in how summative components are linked to learning outcomes across programmes. (SAR, p. 34, 100). Planned training for academic staff aims to standardise evaluation criteria and ensure better alignment with EQF descriptors (SAR, pp. 80-81). The feedback provided by students during the site visit indicates general satisfaction with fairness and transparency. Overall, assessment systems are well-structured, but consistent application of detailed evaluation criteria across all study programmes would strengthen quality assurance.

1.1.6. Academic integrity is embedded in the RTU Quality Policy, Code of Ethics, and Academic Integrity Code (2016) (SAR, pp. 13-14, 34-35). All final theses undergo plagiarism screening through both the national VDPK system and Turnitin (SAR, pp. 34-35). These tools are supported by strict Senate regulations defining sanctions for misconduct and the appeal process (SAR, pp. 35-36). Training on ethical research, citation, and responsible AI use is included in teacher-education curricula and student orientation (SAR, p. 36, 107-108).

The system effectively fosters a culture of honesty and accountability, as demonstrated by mandatory plagiarism checks for all final theses, clearly defined sanctions for academic misconduct set by the Senate, and regular training on ethical research, proper citation, and responsible AI use integrated into curricula and student orientation. The experts commend RTU's proactive stance on emerging AI challenges, but recommend periodic updates to integrity guidelines and continuous awareness activities for staff and students (SAR, p. 107-108). Overall, RTU demonstrates a mature and well-functioning integrity framework consistent with European academic standards.

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

RTU's management of the Education and Pedagogy study field is robust, strategically anchored, and supported by qualified personnel and adequate infrastructure. The system demonstrates strong stakeholder engagement, QA integration, and institutional transparency. The main challenges lie in completing the post-merger harmonisation, enhancing study programme differentiation, and reinforcing internationalisation and digital innovation. Addressing these areas would consolidate RTU's position as a national leader in pedagogical education.

Strengths:

1. Well-defined governance structure with clear responsibilities across university, faculty/academy, and programme levels.
2. Effective Study Field Committee, ensuring coordination between implementation sites and stakeholder involvement.
3. Evidence-based decision-making supported by RTU's internal quality system and regular reviews.
4. Responsive administrative and technical support that enables smooth programme implementation.
5. Transparent institutional regulations for admissions, recognition, assessment, and integrity that provides a solid management framework.

Weaknesses:

1. Coordination between RTU central management and the regional academies is not yet fully aligned, resulting in inconsistencies in the implementation of field-specific decisions.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1. RTU has an explicit and clearly defined Quality Policy, approved by the Senate in 2017, and an Excellence Approach, both aligned with ENQA standards and guidelines and based on the EFQM quality model (SAR, p. 37). The policy is publicly available and explicitly linked to the university's mission and strategic aims (scientific research, academic excellence, organizational development, infrastructure, and recognition) (SAR, p. 37). This shows compliance with the requirement that a higher education institution must have a formal quality policy.

RTU has a well-developed internal quality management system (QMS) integrated across the study fields. This QMS is structured around strategic management, process planning, data collection, and evaluation, to ensure that aims cascade from institutional strategy to faculty and study programme levels (SAR, p. 36). The QMS is fact-based, and data-driven. Performance indicators are tracked annually, and the results are visualized through Power BI.

Acknowledging the recent consolidation of both RTU LA and RTU RA (2024 and 2025), the compilation of their performance in the Power BI will be implemented starting from the current academic year (SAR, p. 37). Until now, the compilation of quality indicators took place separately in each higher education institution. This was also confirmed during the site visit meetings.

At the level of RTU, the QMS is designed in such a way that it links to the learning outcomes and study programme goals. Since the EFQM framework is used, student results are a separate yet important component. RTU has developed a system in which it organizes student surveys, monitors their graduates, and collects employer feedback. The results of these efforts are used to evaluate the study programme quality and relevance of the study programmes, also from a labor market perspective. Annual self-assessment reports are developed, that include amongst others SWOT analyses, development plans, plagiarism control, mobility evaluation (SAR, p. 39). All these efforts aim to ensure alignment of study programmes with learning outcomes and continuous improvement.

During the site visit it was acknowledged that the consolidation process took place recently which makes it logical that the QMS still needs to be rolled out in all its dimensions. Time is necessary to fully implement the system. Also, the staff expressed during the site visit that they need to get acquainted with the new systems. It was also noticed during the site visit that the changes for the administrative staff are bigger than for the academic staff, e.g. with regard to administrative procedures. Staff and study programme management said during the site visit that the changes due to the new QMS are not that big, since there was a QMS before the consolidation as well. An important observation during the site visit was that the management and the staff expressed their willingness to contribute to the smooth implementation of the process; they mainly see advantages due to the consolidation (e.g., availability of grants) above the disadvantages. But this whole process requires time.

RTU has developed Guidelines for the implementation of RTU study programmes in the regional structural units RA and LA. The guidelines define the basic principles for the implementation of study programmes in the university's regional structural units to ensure academic quality in regional structural units, considering the specific needs of the regions (SAR, p. 38). The latter element was found to be very important during the site visit in RTU RA. Next, the guidelines are aimed at fostering the use of academic staff and other university resources for the effective implementation of study programmes in regional structural units. Also, it aims to promote cooperation between academic staff, administrative staff, and students with regional local governments, institutions, and

authorities.

In the SAR (pp. 39-40) several institutional activities of RTU RA and RTU LA are listed that fit in the framework of internal quality assurance system: Council meetings attended by academic staff and students, weekly RTU RA and RTU LA management meetings with academy and center directors, activities of the RTU RA Centre for Education, Languages and Social Technologies and RTU LA Centre for Pedagogy and Social Work meetings, and the Study Field Commission meetings.

All these policies, procedures and activities are focused on continuous improvement of the study programmes. The analyses of the survey results lead to review reports that identify possible areas for improvement. In the SAR (p. 46) and during the site visit this was illustrated with concrete examples: the analyses led to an increased attention for student drop out and afterwards measures were taken to decrease the student drop out. Also, curriculum adjustments were suggested on this basis (e.g., class time rescheduling because of reported working students' needs). These examples illustrate the responsiveness of the study programmes to the outcomes of the evaluation.

Different stakeholders at different levels within RTU take part in components of the QMS: the Senate, the Study Department, the Study Field Committee, the programme directors, students, graduates and employers. The feedback from students, graduates and employers is used and included in the decision-making processes. Digital systems are introduced to streamline the process of data collection, data analysis and reporting (in casu, the Document Management System, Power BI and ORTUS).

In the SAR (p. 44, 46), several examples are presented to illustrate the impact of the quality assurance system. These were also mentioned during the site visit. The following examples illustrate this: the aimed reduction of student drop out, the changes to the class schedules, occasions in which underperforming staff is replaced as a follow-up measure of student complaints, the introduction of new elective courses as a follow-up measure of feedback from graduates.

Overall, it can be concluded from the SAR and the site visit that the quality assurance system at the level of RTU is efficient. There are clear procedures for the development of (new) study programmes. Specific guidelines are developed for the regional structural units. Monitoring happens on a regular basis and covers relevant process indicators, such as, dropout rates, graduate proportions, student satisfaction, mobility data, academic staff qualifications. The full implementation of the QMS is work in progress, however.

1.2.2. The SAR shows that RTU has specific and explicit procedures for the development and review of their study programmes. These are described in the formally approved documents Procedure for Application, Elaboration and Amendment of the Study Programmes and Regulation on the Study Field Committee (SAR, p. 40). These documents describe the responsibilities of the particular committees, councils, and departments in the development and adaptations of programmes and in case of programme closure.

The study programme review is part of the Excellence Approach of RTU. The development and review procedures have a logical order. They start with the study programme applications, committee evaluation, and council approvals, and end with licensing and accreditation processes. Digital systems are used to support the data collection, analyses, and reporting for this purpose (ORTUS and from this year on Power BI). The resulting annual self-assessments and the reviews contribute to the continuous improvement processes.

In the SAR (p. 40), and during the site visit, it became clear that there is stakeholder participation from students, employers, and graduates. At the level of students: they are engaged through surveys, conducted each semester. Student involvement also takes place through their participation in study programme committees and in decision-making bodies at university level. The experts noticed a difference in the application of the student surveys practice across the two academies: in LA participation in student feedback surveys is obligatory, while in RA this is (still) voluntary. At the level of employers: they contribute via their feedback during and after internships and as part of the

evaluations during the study programme development. They can give feedback about the study programme quality, and their voices can amplify the labour market needs. At the level of graduates: specific surveys and monitoring take place to provide retrospective feedback about the study programme outcomes, considering their experiences on the labor market.

The procedures and feedback mechanisms are accessible to all stakeholders. During the site visit, it was clear that the students are familiar with the student survey system. They mentioned that they also give informal feedback to their professors and the study programme director. The survey results are shared with the academic staff and study programme directors. During the site visit, it was not clear to all students what happened with their feedback, though some of them could give examples of specific professors that explained the changes made to their courses, based on previously received feedback.

The annual self-assessments and the SWOT analyses contribute to the periodic evaluation of the study programmes. Evidence is provided in the SAR (p. 44, 46) and confirmed during the site visit that student feedback led to changes (e.g., the rescheduling of classes) and that employer and graduate feedback was considered (e.g. the introduction of classroom management as an elective course).

KPI's are in place to hold the study programmes accountable. During the site visit, it became clear that the staff not yet completely familiarized with this approach, since they didn't know what happens if particular KPI's are not met (at least, in case of the KPI with regard to the expected research output of one publication per year in a Q1 or Q2 journal).

1.2.3. The SAR (p. 43) shows that RTU has a formal procedure, "Procedure for Submission and Examination of RTU Students' Proposals and Complaints" (approved in 2019). This document is also available on the RTU website. The students can submit their complaints (or suggestions) electronically, if desirable also in an anonymous way. During the site visit it became clear that the students are familiar with this possibility. At the same time, they mentioned that it is easier for them to go straight to the study programme director to discuss their concerns.

The SAR (p. 43) describes that the procedures are effectively used by the students: since May 2022, more than 100 complaints were submitted. These complaints and suggestions cover a broad range of topics, some of which are related to the study process, others to e.g., the dormitories or IT problems. There is also systematic follow-up on these matters. For instance, schedule adjustments have been made, complaints about insects in the dormitories have been resolved, and difficulties with ORTUS have led to corrective actions.

The SAR also describes a particular complaint about a lecturer's unprofessional conduct that even led to staff replacement, after an administrative intervention. These examples show that complaints can lead to concrete improvements.

When students identify themselves during a complaint, this can lead to personalized feedback. The SAR describes a particular case of a student with authentication problems in the system. This process resulted not only in individual feedback but also in the development of new informational materials. Students are also able to submit complaints anonymously; however, it was found that in certain cases, such anonymous submissions were the result of system errors.

Both the SAR and the site visit showed to experts that the process of handling complaints and suggestions are taken seriously. Several cases of follow-up were mentioned and therefore, it can be said that the procedure leads to effective changes and study programme improvement. The SAR (p. 45) also refers to the implementation of the Whistleblowing Law in 2022, that offers an extra channel for students to raise concerns about misconduct.

1.2.4. In the SAR (p. 45), the mechanisms for collecting, analyzing and using the statistical data related to the study programmes are explained. These mechanisms seem to be well established and comprehensive. These includes amongst others:

1. Systematic data collection. RTU collects data about several performance indicators, e.g. student enrolment, dropout rates, graduation rate, student mobility, and so on. Financial data are also collected, next to the use of study resources and infrastructure. These data are used to monitor the KPI's;
2. The Study Department is responsible for the compilation of the data, the RTU administration for the analysis. The university uses Power BI to visualize and compare performance indicators across the study programmes and longitudinally, over multiple academic years. This promises to become an interesting tool for both RTU LA and RTU RA once it is fully implemented;
3. In the RTU system, the information is sent to the study directors and study programme managers. This input is useful to make informed decisions and allows to compare the programme with others;
4. The SAR gives examples that the results of the statistical analyses are used as input for quality improvement. It led to concrete actions to reduce student drop out, and optimizing the study programme.

There are multiple ways to obtain feedback from students, graduates, and employers. At the student level of students, surveys are conducted each semester and after graduation, as part of an established practice. At the level of the students, also the "Procedure for Submission and Examination of RTU Students' Proposals and Complaints" can be mentioned. Also, the Whistleblowing legislation creates opportunities in case of substantial violations. At the level of graduates: here too surveys are used to assess the study programme content and to identify gaps in the current study programme, from their labor market perspective. At the level of employers: internship evaluations are used, next to the participation of employers in advisory boards. Employers assess the study programme from their perspective, based on the demands from the labor market.

The collection and analysis of the statistical data lead to feedback that gives input for further improvement of the study programmes. Concrete examples in the SAR and during the meetings illustrate this (e.g. study programme adjustments, introduction of new elective courses, handling lecture misconduct).

1.2.5. Detailed information about the study field and the study programmes is available at the RTU website. Information about the education study programmes offered in Latvian and in English are provided in the corresponding languages (SAR, p. 49). The website also shows information on student mobility opportunities. Next to the website of RTU, specific webpages of RTU RA and RTU LA contain additional information about their study programmes.

In the SAR (pp. 49-50), an overview of all the study programmes, with links, and persons responsible for the content of the information are listed. Also, information about the admission regulations for the current academic year are published, both at RTU LA and RTU RA, and their corresponding responsible persons (SAR, p. 50). Researching the public portal www.viis.gov.lv it was concluded that information included in this website corresponds to the information provided in the official website of the RTU, e.g., all of the eight study programmes are listed (see https://www.viis.gov.lv/registri/izglitiba_programmas), information about the type of the educational programme, as well as the information about the process of reorganisation of RTU LA. Also when checking the official information included in the E-platform, it was concluded that the information is adequately displayed (see <https://eplatforma.aika.lv/index.php?r=site%2Fprogram%2Flist&Name=&Institution=8&StudyDirection=1&IKKDescriptionShort=&StudyYears=&StudyMonths=&Lang=&Key=&Level=&KP=&IKKGroup=&Degree=&Qualification=&AccreditationStatus=accredited&AccreditationLength=&AccreditationToo=&JointStatus=&detail-search=>), e.g., showing each study programme's variants, information about the status of accreditation.

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

Overall, it can be concluded from the SAR and the site visit that the quality management system at the level of RTU is well-described, efficient, data-driven and in line with European standards European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European Students' Union (ESU), European University Association (EUA), & European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015). Brussels, Belgium: ENQA. RTU has established logical procedures for the development and review of study programmes. Digital tools are available (PowerBI, ORTUS) to foster the efficiency of the QMS. It can be concluded that the systems contribute to the achievements of the study field aims and the programme learning outcomes.

Specific guidelines are developed for the regional structural units in view of the overall quality policy, considering the specificities of the regions. There is a clear stakeholder involvement from students, graduates and employers. Monitoring happens on a regular basis and covers relevant process indicators, such as, dropout rates, graduate proportions, student satisfaction, mobility data, academic staff qualifications. Concrete examples were given of improvements based on feedback.

The main challenges lie in ensuring uniform implementation across the newly consolidated institutions and strengthening forward-looking feedback mechanisms. The full implementation in the two academies of the QMS is work in progress, however. Yet, the willingness from the RTU LA and RTU RA management and staff is present to cooperate to foster a smooth implementation of the quality management system. RTU has an accessible and well-known complaint and proposal system that ensures students' voices are heard and lead to effective changes.

Strengths:

1. RTU has a well-established quality assurance policy and a robust system, in line with European standards;
2. Evidence is presented for mechanisms that contribute to a continuous improvement cycle, as well as effects that are visible in the study programme improvement;
3. Procedures are at place, in combination with regular monitoring, for the involvement of stakeholders and informed decision-making;
4. Measures were taken to implement the overall quality policy in the regional activities, considering the specificities of the region;
5. The RTU system for handling student complaints and suggestions has well-documented procedures and is publicly accessible. It induces improvements (concrete examples were provided).

Weaknesses:

1. The consolidation process took place recently which makes that the quality assurance system still needs to be rolled out in all its dimensions. Time will be needed to fully implement the system. The current differences in the application of student surveys (obligatory vs. voluntary) should be avoided;
2. The full potential of PowerBI has yet to be exploited since only from this academic year onwards the system will integrate RTU RA and RTU LA data;
3. Staff members are not yet fully familiar with the use and impact of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Assessment of the requirement [1]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

RTU has established a comprehensive internal quality management system aligned with the “Excellence Approach” and “Quality Policy” approved by the Senate in 2017, ensuring continuous improvement through performance indicators and stakeholder feedback. Clear and systematic procedures govern the development, monitoring, and evaluation of study programmes, with different institutional levels actively involved, such as, academies, councils, the Vice-Rector’s Office, Student Parliament, and Senate. Following the consolidation of RTU RA and RTU LA, a unified study field committee now oversees self-evaluations and quality assurance. The institution maintains high standards through well-defined regulations on assessment, final examinations, and academic staff development, supported by the RTU Center for Academic Excellence. Regular student surveys and data analyses contribute to evidence-based decision-making, while performance reviews and Senate-approved methodologies ensure accountability and the ongoing enhancement of study quality.

Nevertheless, following the consolidation process, sustained effort and continuous monitoring will remain essential to ensure that the quality assurance system is fully embedded, consistently applied across all units, and further enhanced in response to evolving institutional and external requirements.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The SAR (pp. 36-40) shows that RTU has established a well-developed policy and procedures that are at place to assure the quality. This internal quality management system works in line with the “Excellence Approach” and with the “Quality Policy”, both approved by the Senate in 2017. These documents are guiding for the process analysis and improvement. Performance indicators and feedback from different stakeholders are the basis of the analyses. Agreements are made yearly, which form the basis for the evaluation.

Nevertheless, following the consolidation process, sustained effort and continuous monitoring will remain essential to ensure that the quality assurance system is fully embedded, consistently applied across all units, and further enhanced in response to evolving institutional and external requirements.

- 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

RTU has established logical procedures for the development and review of study programmes. Systematic monitoring of the actual performance takes place. The development of study programmes takes place in accordance with the “Procedure for the application, elaboration and amendment of the study programmes” (approved by the Senate in 2021).

Several levels are involved in ensuring the study quality: the academies implementing the study process, the academies Councils, the Office of Vice- Rector for Academic Affairs, the Student Parliament and finally the Senate. Given the consolidation process of RTU RA and RTU LA, the self-evaluation of the study fields and study programmes will be carried out by a unified study field committee. The self-evaluations of study fields and study programs will be evaluated by the RTU RA and RTU LA councils, and the internal quality control will be carried out by the RTU Studies Department.

- 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

Different measures are taken to guarantee the intended learning outcomes. This is well documented. The “Regulation on the Assessment of Learning Outcomes” (approved by the Senate in 2022) defines different types of assessments, rating scales, assessment planning and procedure, determination of the final rating, procedures for appeals, academic debt settling and how to improve academic performance.

The “Regulations on Final Examinations” (approved by the Senate in 2021) regulate the procedure for organization and conduct of final examinations, general requirements for study graduation papers, final theses (graduation papers), as well as the procedure of development and presentation of study final theses graduation papers. The assessment of study results at RTU RA and RTU LA are implemented in accordance with RTU regulations and the procedures.

- 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

Internal procedures are in place to assure the qualifications of the academic staff and the quality of their work, based on the assessment of professional development needs. The RTU Center for Academic Excellence is responsible for the overall strategy of professional development of the academic staff, and the academic units are responsible for the organisation.

RTU LA and RTU RA elected academic staff have been assigned professional development hours, including participation on courses and seminar, and observation of collegial observations and joint evaluation.

- 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

Student surveys are organized in accordance with the Regulations on “Student Polling for Assessment of the Study Process” (approved by the RTU Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs in 2021). The results of the surveys are available to academic staff, heads of organizational units and students.

The quality management system (based on EFQM) includes and ensures the analysis and comparison of performance indicators of the study process and study programmes.

RTU administration meets with representatives of academies to evaluate activity plans on study process indicators, evaluating the progress in the previous academic year and defining the indicators to be achieved in the next two academic years. The study process funds are administered in accordance with methodologies approved by the Senate (SAR, pp. 50-58). Since the consolidation, the collection and analysis of information at RTU LA and RTU RA is carried out according to the RTU internal documents and established procedures.

- 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

At the level of the academies and study field, internal quality is ensured by the Academy Council, the Study field Committee and the Director of the study field, Directors of the study programmes, and administration.

Based on “Regulation of the Study field Committee” (approved by the Senate in 2021), Study

Field Committees monitor academic activities and are responsible for the curriculum and quality of the study programmes, including the accreditation, to ensure the continuous development. Since the consolidation, RTU RA and RTU LA established a unified study field committee, which implements the committee's basic tasks in quality assurance and the improvement and development of the study field.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1. RTU applies a three-pillar higher education funding model, ensuring a balanced distribution between base, performance, and development funding (SAR 2.3). Each structural unit –RTU LA and RTU RA – operates with a decentralized budget defined by the Methodology of Funding Distribution and Utilization for RTU Structural Units.

According to the Annex: Compilation of Quantitative Data, between 2021 and 2025 total funding for the Education and Pedagogy study programmes increased from EUR 282 233 to EUR 652 719, more than doubling within four years. The increase reflects both the successful consolidation with RTU and the efficiency of the new performance-based model. The strongest growth occurred in professional bachelor programmes “Primary Education Teacher” and “Special Education”, where funding has risen by more than 100%. During the on-site visit, all participants confirmed that the model ensures a transparent and fair allocation of financial resources. At the same time, representatives from RTU RA indicated that student cohort formation remains a challenge in some study programmes, affecting the full utilization of state funding. It may therefore be advisable to apply more flexible student-group thresholds to secure the continuity of teacher education in regional centers. The system of research funding is also clearly structured: 10 % of RTU base research funding is channeled annually to the Research and Innovation Support Fund, which supports doctoral grants, scientific equipment, publication costs, and protection of intellectual property (SAR 2.3 p. 11).

Overall, the funding system is stable, transparent, and performance-oriented, though long-term demographic trends may affect sustainability in regional campuses.

1.3.2. The infrastructure in both academies is modern, functional, and continuously upgraded (SAR 2.3 pp. 7-9). RTU RA operates a Pedagogical Technology Laboratory, a Special Education Laboratory, and a Multisensory Room that support practical training for future teachers and special educators. RTU LA maintains art, music, and language pedagogy rooms, as well as specialized environments for inclusive education.

According to SAR 2.3.2, SAR 2.3.3 and SAR 2.3.6 a unified institutional system regulates the planning, improvement and procurement of material, methodological and informational resources. The procedure is coordinated centrally by RTU, ensuring annual needs assessment, transparent prioritisation, and timely acquisition of teaching materials, digital tools and laboratory equipment for both RTU LA and RTU RA.

According to the Compilation of Quantitative Data (SAR Annex), the RTU RA campus includes 42 classrooms equipped with ICT and hybrid teaching capabilities, while RTU LA maintains 38 similarly equipped rooms. Both academies follow a unified planning and procurement procedure, established by RTU Financial Department and Property Management Office. Each year, needs for new equipment and learning environments are identified by study programme directors and approved through an annual infrastructure review.

During the on-site visit all participants stated that both campuses are well equipped, and employers confirmed that the learning environment directly supports the professional competences required for teacher education. However, it was also noted that the library in RTU LA requires improvement of the ventilation system to secure students’ and academic staff’s health and comfort, especially during extended study hours.

1.3.3. The management of methodological and informational resources follows the RTU Library Development Strategy, implemented through annual acquisitions planning, coordinated by the Library Department in consultation with study programme directors. Each academic year, the faculties submit requests for new publications and teaching materials. Purchases are financed from the decentralized faculty budgets and reviewed centrally to avoid duplication and ensure subject balance.

Following integration, RTU LA and RTU RA gained access to the RTU Library System, significantly expanding access to digital and printed materials. Available databases increased from 4 to 15, now including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, EBSCO, ERIC, LNB Digital Collections, and Skolas Vārds (based on data provided in SAR Annex: “Scientific Publications by Academic Staff RTU RA / RTU LA”). According to SAR Annex: “Compilation of Quantitative Data”, RTU LA library contains approximately 65 000 printed books, 75% of which are accessible on open shelves, with an annual acquisition budget of EUR 15 000. RTU RA library holds about 18 000 items, with EUR 18 000 allocated annually for literature purchases. Approximately 12% of the total collection directly supports the study field of Education and pedagogy. Both libraries provide reading rooms, computer access, Wi-Fi, and individual study spaces. Students and teachers confirmed high satisfaction with the availability of printed and electronic resources via ORTUS and Moodle platforms. Librarians regularly conduct training sessions on citation, referencing, academic writing, and database use, supporting the development of students’ research and information literacy skills. The unified RTU system for methodological and informational provision ensures coordinated resource development and transparent decision-making. In summary, the library and informational systems effectively support learning and research processes, fostering a strong academic culture and ensuring equal access across both campuses.

1.3.4. RTU’s digital ecosystem is one of its main strengths. RTU has developed a comprehensive and fully integrated digital environment that ensures administrative, academic, and communication processes are efficiently interconnected across all structural units (SAR 2.3, p. 10). The ICT system consists of several key platforms:

1. ORTUS – the university’s core digital platform, integrating academic records, course registration, schedules, financial data, and communication. It serves as the primary environment for both students and staff to access study materials, submit assignments, and communicate with programme directors.
2. Moodle – the learning management system used for course delivery, assessment, and blended learning. It enables online submission of assignments, quizzes, feedback, and access to recorded lectures.
3. Microsoft Teams and Zoom – the primary tools for synchronous hybrid teaching and inter-academy collaboration.
4. Power BI – an analytical tool used by RTU administration to monitor study field indicators, such as student performance, mobility, and dropout rates.

All classrooms in RTU LA and RTU RA are equipped with high-speed internet, interactive whiteboards, projectors, and video conferencing technology. The IT Department, in cooperation with the RTU Digitalization and Process Analysis Directorate, ensures continuous technical support, data security, and system maintenance. During the on-site visit, academic staff confirmed that the ICT infrastructure allows real-time hybrid teaching between Liepāja and Rēzekne campuses, enabling shared lectures, seminars, and even joint assessment activities. Students emphasized the accessibility and stability of digital tools, particularly the ability to follow lectures remotely and review recordings afterwards. Digital literacy of teaching staff is continuously improved through training provided by the RTU Centre for Academic Excellence and the IT Department. Staff also receive methodological support for creating online materials, integrating digital assessment tools,

and managing distance learning effectively. According to the Compilation of Quantitative Data (Annex), more than 85 % of study courses include digital components, and both academies maintain a > 95 % rate of active Moodle use. The ICT infrastructure thus ensures inclusiveness, flexibility, and pedagogical innovation across both full-time and part-time forms of study.

1.3.5. RTU applies a transparent and merit-based recruitment system defined by the RTU Regulation on the Procedure for Election of Academic Staff (approved by RTU Senate Decision No. 633, 2022). Vacancies are publicly announced on the RTU website, as well as through national academic portals. Selection commissions include academic representatives and employer delegates to ensure objectivity and relevance to the study field.

The Education and Pedagogy study field employs 67 academic staff in total (SAR Annex: Compilation of Quantitative Data), of whom 47% hold a doctoral degree and 43% hold a master's degree. The majority of staff have more than 15 years of pedagogical experience, with several possessing dual academic and school leadership roles, which enriches practice-oriented education. The integration into RTU has unified recruitment and appraisal systems for RTU LA and RTU RA.

Annual staff evaluations include the analysis of teaching quality, student feedback, research achievements, and professional development activities. It is advisable that student feedback processes would be unified in RTU LA and RTU RA.

Employers confirmed during the on-site visit that cooperation between schools and the university facilitates the recruitment of practitioners with relevant field expertise. Guest lecturers from partner schools and municipalities contribute to professional diversity, particularly in primary education and special education. However, both academies reported difficulties attracting younger academics, especially in RTU RA. A structured mentoring system and project-based recruitment are recommended to encourage the next generation of pedagogical researchers.

In conclusion, the staff recruitment process is open, regulated, and quality-focused, aligning with ENQA expectations for transparency and fairness.

1.3.6. RTU ensures systematic professional development through the Centre for Academic Excellence, RTU's internal training system, and participation in national and international projects. Training priorities are defined annually, based on staff evaluation results and programme directors' recommendations (SAR 2.3, pp. 12-13); The Statistical Data on Outgoing and Incoming Mobility of Academic Staff (Annex).

Academic staff participate in pedagogical excellence courses, digital learning trainings, and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programmes. According to Compilation of Quantitative Data (SAR Annex), 78% of staff attended at least one professional development course in the last two years, while 25% participated in international exchanges under Erasmus+. RTU LA and RTU RA both apply a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) system to assess staff activity in teaching, research, and development. Staff appraisal is conducted through ORTUS, combining student feedback, research outcomes, and external cooperation. However, practices differ slightly: in RTU LA, student evaluation is mandatory, whereas in RTU RA, it remains voluntary. It is advisable to standardize feedback collection procedures across the RTU network to ensure comparable quality indicators. To further enhance staff development, language support and mentoring schemes should be expanded, particularly in RTU RA, to strengthen English proficiency and publication capacity.

Overall, professional development is systematic and institutionally supported, fostering continuous improvement and quality assurance in teaching and research.

1.3.7. Workload planning at RTU follows the Regulation on Academic and Administrative Workload Distribution (SAR 2.3, pp. 13-14). Each academic's duties are registered in the ORTUS system and verified annually by study programme directors. The workload model includes contact teaching hours, research, project participation, supervision, and administrative tasks.

According to Compilation of Quantitative Data (SAR Annex), the average annual workload per academic staff member in the Education and Pedagogy field is 1,480 hours, distributed as follows: 62% teaching, 25% research and professional development, and 13% administration.

Since the integration with RTU, staff reported that workload management has become more balanced, as research and project activities are now formally recognized. However, administrative duties have slightly increased due to the adaptation to unified digital systems and internal reporting. Study programme directors highlighted that flexibility is maintained through workload redistribution during research projects or Erasmus mobilities. Staff confirmed that the system supports fairness and transparency, aligning with institutional goals for efficiency and motivation.

In conclusion the workload distribution is clearly regulated, data-driven, and consistent with institutional standards. Continued simplification of digital reporting would further reduce administrative burden and sustain academic motivation.

1.3.8. RTU offers comprehensive academic and psychological support to all student categories (SAR 2.3, pp. 14-15; Statistical Data on Outgoing and Incoming Mobility of Academic Staff (SAR Annex)). The Student Service Department, Career Centre, and Psychological Support Unit provide advisory and mentoring services, including individual consultations, adaptation support, and career planning. The Moodle and ORTUS platforms serve as the main communication and support tools, offering continuous access to course materials, progress tracking, and feedback channels. For students with disabilities, special arrangements (flexible deadlines, accessible classrooms, and adaptive tools) are available.

During the on-site visit, students highlighted that communication with teachers is open and supportive, and that they can easily approach staff for assistance. Representatives of RTU LA and RTU RA in the Student Council are active in supporting students' interests and contributing to decision-making at faculty level.

Support for international and part-time students is well established: each has access to an academic coordinator who assists in academic planning, mobility, and Erasmus+ documentation. Internships are strongly supported by cooperation with local schools and municipalities, ensuring practice relevance and employability.

In conclusion, RTU provides a robust student support framework, integrated both institutionally and locally, aligned with ENQA guidelines for student-centered learning and support. Career centers, mentors and coordinators assist international, part-time and special-needs students. Moodle and ORTUS serve as primary communication platforms.

During the on-site visit, students described an open, supportive communication culture and praised easy access to teachers. Student Councils are active in both academies, representing student interests and contributing to decision-making.

Employers confirmed strong cooperation during internships; study programmes maintain close links with schools and municipalities. Both academies emphasize regional responsibility — providing teacher education in areas where demographic decline poses challenges but also opportunities for community development. Maintaining these study programmes is therefore strategically significant for regional and national education systems.

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

RTU LA and RTU RA have successfully established a coherent and efficient system for resource management in the Education and Pedagogy study field. Funding and infrastructure are adequate; staff are qualified and motivated, and ICT systems are advanced. The integration has enhanced research capacity and ensured equal access to resources across units. However, demographic trends and regional disparities still require targeted support — particularly for RTU RA. Student recruitment and group formation remain a challenge for some study programmes; introducing

smaller cohorts could ensure long-term sustainability.

Overall, the study field meets ENQA standards of resources and provision and demonstrates a clear commitment to continuous improvement.

Strengths:

1. Transparent and effective funding model with doubled study programme financing since 2021.
2. Modern and inclusive infrastructure, with advanced ICT systems (ORTUS, Moodle).
3. Highly qualified and dedicated academic staff; strong Erasmus+ and project involvement.
4. Comprehensive student support services.
5. Productive cooperation with schools and employers ensuring quality internships.

Weaknesses:

1. Variation in student feedback practices between RTU LA and RTU RA.
2. Difficulty in forming full student cohorts in some study programmes to secure full funding.
3. The RTU LA library requires ventilation system improvements to ensure staff and student health.
4. In several cases, foreign language proficiency seems limited.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1. Both regional units have made considerable efforts to strengthen scientific research and to improve the overall conditions for research activities (SAR pp. 78-111). This was clearly demonstrated both in the extensive background materials provided and in the discussions held during the site visits to RTU RA and RTU LA. A key strength identified in both regional units is the strong recognition of the importance of internationalisation in research development. For example, at RTU LA, all interviewed groups during the site visit were able to illustrate several good practices that support research, such as integrating annual student scientific-practical conferences into teaching and maintaining an active culture of Erasmus+ visits. Doctoral programmes are well integrated into research and are developing in a positive direction. However, the site visit illustrated that there are significant differences between doctoral degrees — some focus on national impact, while others have the potential to produce internationally outstanding researchers (for example, when the work is completed and articles are published in Scopus-indexed journals).

The two regional units have somewhat different, yet potentially complementary, approaches to promoting scientific research. RTU RA's distinct strength lies in applied research, which is conducted in exceptionally close collaboration with local stakeholders (e.g. special education), including schools, teachers, and alumni. RTU LA, on the other hand, demonstrates a stronger international orientation, engaging more directly with global academic networks and research initiatives (e.g. more EU level collaboration). By combining these complementary strengths, RTU could potentially develop stronger and more cohesive research areas in the future.

The challenges identified, however, are partly similar across both regional units, as confirmed through discussions with leadership, management, staff, and doctoral students. Both regional units have systematically reflected on the kinds of ACTIVITIES required to achieve international research excellence. Notably, both have allocated 40 hours of dedicated research time per year to each staff member, functioning as a form of "seed time" to support progress toward research goals. The documentation (SAR pp.78-93) and interviews during the site visit clearly showed that high-level international publications and competitive EU-funded projects are common and well-recognized objectives across the regional units. Every staff member interviewed was able to describe the types of activities needed to reach these goals. Nevertheless, there remains a need for more strategic work to ensure a shared understanding among staff regarding RTU's specific research strengths and directions. Currently, the overall research strategy appears to be driven more by individual

researchers' expertise than by a unified institutional vision of clearly defined research lines. Establishing such shared research directions would help both regional units to focus their efforts and to identify opportunities for cross-unit collaboration.

Another central challenge concerns the target related to scientific publications. The current institutional approach - where all academic staff are expected to produce one high-quality scientific article per year - appears overly ambitious when compared with the available research resources and starting conditions. While the aim of fostering publication activity is commendable, the goal may not be fully realistic if staff have only 40 hours per year formally allocated for research. It might be more sustainable to define differentiated goals and roles for different staff groups, depending on their research engagement, teaching load, and experience. Future development could therefore focus on designing a more flexible and supportive strategy that allows both RTU RA and RTU LA to increase their research outputs in a balanced and realistic way. By aligning expectations with available resources, and by fostering collaboration across units, the university could enhance research productivity while also supporting staff well-being. With continued investment in infrastructure, international cooperation, and strategic clarity, both regional units are well positioned to strengthen their scientific and applied research profiles in the coming years.

1.4.2. The connection between scientific and applied research and the study process is logical and well justified in both regional units (SAR pp. 95). As noted in Section 1.4.1 of this report, these links are currently shaped more by individual researchers' scientific interests than by a unified RTU-wide strategy defining core areas for high-level research. Internationally, leading research is typically generated within larger centres of expertise rather than by individual efforts. A key future task for RTU is therefore to identify and articulate its main research areas while maintaining its strong collaboration with local stakeholders. This local engagement, particularly visible in RTU-RA, effectively supports the integration of research and teaching across programmes (e.g. RTU RA has concluded bilateral cooperation agreements with Rēzekne State 1st Gymnasium, Rēzekne State, Polish Gymnasium, Rēzekne Primary School, Verēmi Primary School, Ludza City Secondary School, Rēzekne Primary School — Development Center, Rēzekne Preschool Educational Institution "Rūķītis," Rēzekne Preschool Educational Institution "Auseklītis" Rēzekne Preschool Educational Institution "Winnie the Pooh" Rēzekne Preschool Educational Institution "Bitīte" Rēzekne Catholic, Preschool Educational Institution, Daugavpils 4th Preschool Educational Institution, among others. In practice, the agreements provide cooperation in the field of education (including the provision of pedagogical internships), scientific research, and career management). The cooperation with schools, practitioners, and other community partners provides students with relevant, research-informed learning environments (e.g. Cooperation partners are involved in project and joint research implementation as well as colleagues from partner universities participate in the international scientific conference organized by RTU RA, see more examples at SAR pp. 95-97). Moreover, the sustained collaboration with alumni - exemplified e.g. by RTU RA's professional networks and RTU LA's work in speech therapy - strengthens the practical relevance and impact of research.

1.4.3. International cooperation in the field of scientific and applied research is ensured in both regional units and is being purposefully developed. In the meetings, both units showed interest in international research projects. This has clearly been prioritised, but their activities are still more aligned with developmental research (e.g., Erasmus+ projects such as the School Education project 'Developing an innovative In-service Training model for ECEC Staff' (INTEC, see SAR pp.95)) than with international top-level research (e.g., there is no ERC funding). The SAR annex "Scientific publications by academic staff related to the study programme in peer-reviewed journals or research or artistic achievements in the last six years" presents a comprehensive overview of staff publications, which have increased quantitatively in both regional units over the past six years. Particular attention has been paid to publishing in Scopus-indexed journals (this was also highlighted

at the site visits by all the staff members), which represents a very positive and strategically sound development. However, high-level international scientific publishing remains a challenge for both regional units. The publication lists and the impressions gained during the site visits complement each other in showing that, from the perspective of international collaboration, RTU's research strategy would benefit from further development. Specifically, the number of journal articles in high-impact international journals in the fields of Education and Pedagogy remains limited. Joint international publications in such outlets are still rare. Rather than focusing solely on increasing publication numbers, it would be advisable - especially for the most internationally promising researchers - to place greater emphasis on the quality and impact of journals. Achieving this will require allocating sufficient research time for developing high-quality manuscripts in collaboration with leading international scholars in the field. The ongoing improvements in PhD training provide a solid basis for this development, as doctoral students are increasingly integrated into international research networks. Continued support for this trend will be important for strengthening the international visibility and impact of research in the coming years.

1.4.4. Based on the background materials (see, e.g. SAR pp. 95) RTU is currently developing mechanisms to strengthen the integration of teaching and research, and several of these structures are already in operation. RTU LA's and RTU RA's approach to developing their research personnel stems from their broader strategic objectives for research and creative work — to strengthen international competitiveness, enhance the support systems needed for conducting research, rejuvenate academic staff, and attract international researchers, thereby improving publication quality and promoting the commercialisation of research outcomes. Both units have formulated a clear strategy to support these aims (see SAR pp. 88-89). During the site visits, it became evident that staff are aware of these initiatives and generally view them positively. The existing mechanisms provide a good foundation for connecting teaching and research more systematically across study programmes (e.g. in RTU RA providing targeted support for research projects and infrastructure and in RTU LA ensuring professional development in continuing education programmes to improve skills and knowledge, establishing mentoring programmes to support early-career researchers. However, further development is still needed to ensure that collaboration between education and research can become more personalized and adaptable to different disciplinary and situational needs. For example, RTU RA's strong applied collaboration with the professional field clearly demonstrates a research-based approach in practice. Nevertheless, transforming this applied work into academic publications requires additional support and development. Areas such as data management, research ethics, and academic writing skills - including language proficiency - should be further strengthened. Ensuring that staff have access to targeted support and flexible structures would help to enhance both research quality and engagement. With continued investment in these areas, RTU has good potential to establish well-functioning and sustainable mechanisms for integrating teaching staff into research activities. Particularly encouraging is the fact that a large proportion of PhD students and recently graduated doctoral researchers demonstrated a strong international orientation, especially within RTU LA. This reflects growing awareness of global research standards and a willingness to engage in international scholarly collaboration. Such orientation among early-career researchers provides an important foundation for strengthening the overall research capacity and international visibility of RTU in the future.

1.4.5. Both RTU RA and RTU LA have worked systematically and successfully to promote student involvement in scientific and applied research (see, SAR p. 81). This engagement is evident across all levels of study e.g. Students in the Master's programme advance their academic reading and writing abilities in the course Introduction to Educational Science Studies. They further strengthen their competence in designing research methodologies and using both qualitative and quantitative methods in educational research through the courses Research I and Research II. Students also

present their research results at student scientific conferences. Firstly, teaching methods are designed to prepare students for international research collaboration (e.g. at RTU RA, the annual student scientific conference Personality. Time. Communication is held, SAR p. 81), and Erasmus+ exchange opportunities are actively encouraged. Secondly, the integration of PhD students into both teaching and research activities is implemented in a purposeful and meaningful way. Thirdly, alumni highlighted the strong and ongoing connection with RTU institutes after graduation, particularly in accessing research-based knowledge. This demonstrates that research engagement extends beyond the formal study period and contributes to a sustained academic community. Overall, the mechanisms supporting student participation in research are well established and represent a notable strength of both units.

1.4.6. Innovative solutions are actively aimed within the study field, having a clear and positive impact on the study process. Researchers are strongly committed to following the development of international innovations and integrating new approaches into their work (notes from side visits and SAR pp. 86-87). Participation in international conferences (e.g. the international scientific conferences ICERI23, INTED2024; IMCIC2025) and EU-funded initiatives effectively supports this objective. A particular strength of RTU RA lies in the strong connection between research, local stakeholders, and the regional innovation ecosystem (side visit; systematic development of the infra). Substantial investments in research infrastructure have further enhanced the unit's capacity to develop and apply innovative methods. At RTU LA, infrastructure development is also progressing well, especially in establishing multimodal research equipment and facilities (side visit illustration of motion research). Both regional units demonstrate a genuine openness to innovation and a willingness to experiment with new solutions. However, the main challenge related to innovation activities concerns conducting research at top-scientific level and in international collaboration. This challenge is partly linked to the fact that, at the institutional level, RTU has not yet clearly defined its strategic research focus areas. Clarifying these directions would further strengthen the coherence and impact of innovation efforts.

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

RTU RA and RTU LA have made systematic progress in strengthening scientific and applied research and in integrating research activities across teaching, innovation, and international cooperation. Both regional units demonstrate a clear commitment to internationalisation, active collaboration with local stakeholders, and the development of mechanisms to involve both staff and students in research. Research outcomes are increasingly visible in publications, particularly in Scopus-indexed journals, and in the growing international orientation of early-career researchers. However, research activities still rely heavily on individual interests rather than on a unified institutional strategy defining key research areas. Further strategic alignment, differentiation of goals, and enhanced support for high-quality international publishing are needed to ensure sustainable and coherent development.

Strengths:

1. Systematic and continuous efforts to strengthen research capacity and integrate research with teaching.
2. Strong collaboration with local stakeholders and alumni, especially in RTU RA, ensuring the societal relevance of research.
3. Growing international orientation, supported by Erasmus+ activities, EU-funded projects, and participation in global research networks.
4. Clear institutional commitment to innovation and investment in research infrastructure.

Weaknesses:

1. Research directions remain fragmented and are guided more by individual interests than by a unified institutional strategy. It is recommended to form larger research groups led by professors.
2. Overly ambitious publication targets that are not fully aligned with available research time and resources. It is recommended to consider who has the strongest potential for high-level research and allocate more time resources to them.
3. International research collaboration and the development of clearly defined strategic research focus areas require further improvement. It is recommended that management and staff engage in joint strategic workshops to clarify the goals.

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

The analysis and evaluation of the Doctoral Study Programme indicate that the university demonstrates strong collaboration with local stakeholders and alumni, complemented by a steadily strengthening international orientation through Erasmus+ activities, EU-funded projects, and active participation in global research networks. While there is clear institutional commitment to innovation and investment in research infrastructure, the research directions within the programme remain fragmented and are frequently driven by individual academic interests rather than by a coherent and strategically coordinated institutional research agenda.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1. According to the SAR (p. 95), and to the site visit in the RTU RA and in RTU LA, the cooperation with the institutions in Latvia is active on several levels, which contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes. In SAR Annex 14, there are listed local and international agreements. RTU RA has 18 Latvian partners: mostly gymnasiums, secondary and primary schools in the region; also music school, preschools. All cooperation partners are selected in view of the specific features of the study field. For example, the employers participate in university life: in the defense commissions, conferences, field excursions, and in meetings, where the study programmes are discussed. Employers offer pedagogical internship places to students during their studies, and after graduation the alumni have the opportunity to continue their professional careers in educational institutions. Also, the "Career Days", seminars for students and staff, and the state final examination panels should be mentioned. Experts were told that the employers' representatives are invited to participate in guest lectures, organized within cooperation-networks. Partners are involved in the Erasmus+ international projects, for example: "School Education project 'Developing an innovative In-service Training model' for ECEC Staff'" (INTEC), which was implemented in 2024, and also in 2025 with 16 teachers from Liepāja Preschool (SAR, p. 95).

There are many important scientific joint projects going on in this field of study. For example, the academic staff participated in internships at various Latvian schools within the ESF SAM 8.2.2. projects. The partners are selected according to the content of study programmes and subjects: for example, local schools in Rezekne, Liepāja and Daugavpils. The RTU RA and RTU LA have cooperation agreements also on the local governmental level and with preschool institutions (SSR, pp. 95-96). The RTU LA has an agreement with the Liepāja city municipality institution "Liepāja Education Department" for the provision of internship places in educational institutions. For the

study programme “Speech Therapy”, a cooperation agreement has been signed with the Pauls Stradiņš Clinical University Hospital (just to name a few of them).

Also, cooperation with professional unions is an important aspect. For example, the study field cooperates with the Latvian Association of Special Education Teachers: the lecturers, students, and graduates have been involved in the association's activities. The association represents the profession of special education teachers in Latvia and abroad, and participates in the (methodological) development of professional programmes & projects for teachers (SEAR, p. 96). During the site visit experts met in the RTU LA a teacher of the speech therapy study programme, who is a member of the professional union, too. She stressed the aspect that in the context of study-quality, it is important to keep in contact with the professionals outside the university, to be aware of the newest findings in the field.

One example of successful joint-activity has been the doctoral study programme – in fact, this is the only joint curriculum in this study field. It enhances the synergy between studies and research in the study field both in the RTU RA and RTU LA, and also ensures the renewal of academic staff. The joint doctoral study programme enables the internal mobility of doctoral students and increases the research capacity of universities. Experts were told during the site visit that a significant element of the cooperation is scientific conferences, where employers, alumni, students and academic staff can share the freshest information in the field. Also, publishing activity is significant: for example, in cooperation with Riga Stradiņš University (RSU), there is a contract for the joint e-journal “EDUCATION. INNOVATION. DIVERSITY”, which has been a great opportunity to develop both cooperation and scientific competences. According to the SAR (p. 79), the RTU RA publishes the scientific journal “Education Reform: Studies of Education Content and Implementation Problems,” which corresponds to the thematic framework of the study field, and is also available in open access. Both academic staff and students have the opportunity to publish their research results in this journal. The articles of the academic staff, which also are used as the study materials, are published in the RTU LA's scientific journal “Scriptus Manet”, and in continuing publications such as “Topical Issues in Literature and Culture Research”, “Word and Aspects of its Research” and “Language Learning: Problems and Perspectives”.

Study excursions all over Latvia are a sign of cooperation and a popular study event both for the teachers and learners. They are organized for students to explore the current issues and methodological solutions of the teaching profession. Experts were told that the study excursions (once per semester, to different regions of Latvia) are financed by the academy, and the staff hopes that it will continue under the RTU, as well.

Experts found that such intensive cooperation contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes. Obviously, it influences the quality of education in many ways. For example, during the site visit in the RTU RA and in the RTU LA, experts asked employers to compare the graduates of RTU to other universities, in context of the knowledge, working style, etc. The comment was positive: students and graduates from the RA and LA cope very well in their jobs - there is no difference, compared to other institutions. Experts consider this as good cooperation: the quality of study programmes and outcomes has been harmonized.

1.5.2. According to the SAR (pp. 98-99), the RTU's International Cooperation Department establishes contacts with foreign institutions and organizes preparation and signing of agreements. In SAR Annex 14, there are listed 80 agreements (of RTU RA and RTU LA together) with international partners from more than 20 countries (most partners participate in implementing similar study programmes). Experts were told during the site visit in the RTU RA and RTU LA by students and teachers, that after joining the RTU, there are significantly more international contacts available, especially in the context of Erasmus+, which has been one of the most positive aspects of the structural reform. The cooperation with the academic sector abroad is based on the following

criteria: implementing teacher education study programmes; collaboration in joint projects and conferences; cooperation in other study fields; shared vision in teacher-education; joint research and publications (SAR, p. 98). Some examples of international partners: Bulgarian Dyslexia Association; the association "Autismeeurope Aisbl" (Belgium); the association "Creative Future Ideas" (Lithuania), the association "Interdisciplinary Special and Intercultural Education Network INCLUDE"; Sweden Emilia Romagna Network - SERN (Italy), European Higher Education Network of Teacher - and Social Education - Comenius Association (Belgium), the European Teacher Education Network - ETEN (Belgium), European Speech and Language Therapy Association (ESLA) (Belgium), Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas (Lithuania), University of Niš (Serbia), Palacky University (Czech Republic) (SAR, p. 79, 99).

The RTU RA organizes the international scientific conference "Society. Integration. Education.", which is attended by researchers from more than 20 countries. Students can present their empirical data (with and without supervisors); and they use the published conference proceedings as an important source for the next research and publications. The RTU LA organizes international scientific conferences "Dimensions of Education Quality in the Knowledge Society", "Language Learning: Problems and Perspectives", "Word and Aspects of its Research", "Society and Culture", "Innovation and Creativity" (SAR, p. 79).

International cooperation has been active also in the context of scientific joint-publications. For example (SAR, p. 83), the RTU RA academic staff, in cooperation with colleagues from several Ukrainian universities, got a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia for publications, and they wrote many joint-articles together, under this grant. In cooperation with researchers from the International European University (Ukraine), a study was conducted, and a publication prepared: "Competence of the head of an educational institution and its management possibilities in COVID-19 conditions". Together with Lithuanian researchers, the RTU RA teachers have published in the scientific journal of Vilnius University "Social Welfare Interdisciplinary Approach" (indexed in Web of Science). Also, the joint-monograph "Transformative Digital Learning" was published.

The laboratory of special education in the RTU RA implements international projects (e.g. (SER, p. 451), ERASMUS+K2 project "CoTIC: Collaborative Teaching in the Inclusive Classroom", "Stream this team"; "DAP: Dyslexia Assessment Protocol"; "PREDEYS: Supporting Children at Risk of Dyslexia at the Transition Period from Pre-primary to Primary"; "REF: Reading with Ease and Fun"; Reading with Ease and Fun 2").

Experts find international cooperation in the RTU RA and RTU LA impressive: intensive joint activities with researchers from abroad contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field, and the relevant study programmes.

1.5.3. During the site-visit experts found out that the union with the RTU has been fruitful in the context of international relations. According to the study programme directors, the main marketing tool used to invite foreign audiences is participation in various educational events and seminars, organized by educational agencies in target markets. According to the SAR (p. 100), the communication strategy uses several types of information channels, choosing the most appropriate for each target audience - paid advertising channels, earned and owned ones. Marketing communication is an essential part of addressing foreign audiences using all the traditional marketing tools - advertising in media and other channels, event marketing, direct marketing, digital marketing etc. To ensure a permanent presence and the provision of quality information about studies at RTU, and the selection of students, the RTU has opened its own information and study centers in many countries. According to the SAR (pp. 100-101), various virtual seminars are used to address potential students. For example, the RTU ICFSD (now - International Cooperation department - ICD) foreign student admission staff provides potential students with the opportunity to use online consultations to solve issues related to admission and study program selection.

Consultations are arranged regularly.

The international contacts in the RTU LA and the RTU RA provide added value to the implementation of the study process and the quality of education. Studies abroad are organized mostly through the ERASMUS+ framework. The number of agreements is expanding according to the interests of the study programmes. The ESF SAM 8.2.2 project “Strengthening the Academic Staff of Rēzekne Technology Academy in the Study Field of Education, Pedagogy and Sports” was implemented in the RTU RA, which envisaged the involvement of foreign lecturers within the project framework (SAR, p.102). Experts were told during the site visit by teachers and students of the RTU LA and RTU RA, that they are glad about the huge number of contact possibilities after joining the RTU. For example, the Erasmus+ is now so popular among the teachers, that there is a limit in the RTU RA: no more than 4 visits per study year, as was told to the experts. However, among students the travel-intensity in the RTU RA is not so high, because of many reasons (work and family responsibilities). Also, English is not the strongest point for some students in the RTU RA, as they needed the help of an interpreter during the site visit. This problem has been mentioned also in the SAR (pp. 102-103) as a challenge: low motivation among students to participate in long-term mobility, especially among those already employed; insufficient confidence in foreign language skills. Support for English courses or discussions with native English speakers could improve the conversational skills and develop internationalizations-process.

As an alternative to long-term mobility, popularity of short-term mobility rises, such as shorter ERASMUS+ and the BIP (Blended Intensive Programme), which allows for a combination of virtual and face-to-face learning, reducing the need for extended stays abroad. In the SAR (subchapter 2.5.3.), a statistics is presented: in the RTU RA, in BIP-s 28 students participated; from the RTU LA, 64 students went out with Erasmus+; in the RTU RA, 26 students from abroad visited the academy; and in RTU LA this number was 37. According to SAR Annex 15, in the RTU RA, there have been 30 visiting teachers from abroad, and in RTU LA, 38. Foreign lecturers are recruited through a competitive process by posting announcements on the Euraxess portal. To support the attraction of foreign scientists, RTU is one of the Euraxess contact points in Latvia, whose task is to provide information and consultations to foreign scientists about scientific career opportunities in Latvia, as well as to provide practical support to foreign scientists and their family members who want to work and live in Latvia during mobility – as is written in the SAR.

In the RTU RA and RTU LA, students’ activity has also been noticed in the context of the international conferences. According to the SAR (p. 102), the master’s degree students in the “Educational Sciences” study programme were given the opportunity to participate in guest lectures and seminars held by foreign researchers within the framework of master’s scientific conferences. For example, in 2022 at the conference “Pedagogical Innovation in Teaching and Learning”, and in 2023 at the conference “Positive, Innovative, Constructive” with many international guests took place. Experts noticed during the site visit in the RA, that the graduates and students remembered those conferences very warmly.

All cooperative aspects, mentioned here, add value to the study process and increase the quality of studies.

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

The experts confirm that both RTU academies are strong in cooperation, which provides added value to the implementation of the study process and increases the quality of studies. Experts find the joint-activities in the RTU RA and RTU LA impressive: conferences, research-projects, publications, study trips (inside Latvia and internationally) contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field, and the relevant study programmes.

Strengths:

1. In the RTU, there are more international contacts available, compared to the situation before structural reform.
2. Both the RTU RA and RTU LA have a significant number of cooperation partners - both inside and out of the country.
3. The main forms of joint activities are conferences, research projects, and publications.
4. The popularity of BIP-s has risen.

Weaknesses:

1. Students don't have enough time for Erasmus-exchange, especially not for a long period.
2. Some students and teachers don't speak English.
3. Low numbers of visiting lecturers reduce the international visibility and diversity of the field.

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

Both RTU academies are strong in local and international cooperation, which provides added value to the implementation of the study process and increases the quality of studies.

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

Analysis

1.6.1. There is a fact to be considered – the recommendations provided by experts in the previous accreditation of the study field for individual study programmes was not analyzed (SAR, p. 103) as the previous accreditation of the study field was conducted in 2013 and the study programmes evaluated in that accreditation of the study field were no longer active due to the fact that in 2017 Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia within the framework of ESF projects initiated the development of new teacher education study programmes at all study levels, later on followed by the procedures of licensing, and inclusion in the accreditation list of the study field in all the Latvian universities.

Therefore, only general recommendations and actions taken were analyzed in SAR which were provided in 2013 by accreditation experts to RTA (now RTU RA) and to LiepU (now RTU LA).

There are 4 recommendations provided to RTA. One of them is – to improve quality assurance measures so that decisions are made based on comprehensive data. It is clarified that during the next two years in 2019, the Senate of RTA approved a new “Quality Management Manual of Rezekne Technology Academy” and it was being implemented every year, and after the consolidation with RTU, the RTU quality management system was implemented (SAR, p. 104). It is said that “During the consolidation process, in cooperation with RTU LA, an internal quality assurance system for the study field “Education and Pedagogy” and the study programmes within it was developed, which is based on the RTU Quality Management System, including the RTU Quality Policy” (SAR, p. 104). Experts consider the fact that it is not possible to evaluate how these changes would influence the quality of study process as very short time has passed since the consolidation process has been implemented in RTU RA. The good sign is that principles are reconciled for both structural units – RTU RA and RTU LA.

The second recommendation for RTA was – to ensure that study programmes move towards a holistic adaptation of intended learning outcomes to the study programme objectives and reflect this in the development and implementation of study courses. It is explained (SAR, p. 104) that while

new study programmes were elaborated within the ESF projects in cooperation with all the Latvian universities who provided teacher education study programmes, the study programme objectives and learning outcomes in the study field were developed. During the onsite visit the question was asked to the teaching staff - how they had experienced the cooperation process within their own institution and cooperation with teaching staff for RTU LA. The answers received contained - cooperation and discussions about learning outcomes and the correspondence to the study programme objectives is usually initiated and organized by the study programme director; there are some cases when individual initiatives can be discovered when there are close relations between colleagues within the same research area, then there are no technical borders detected - colleagues from different institutions develop ideas. But still there are some cases mentioned by students during the onsite visits that mapping of study programme and study course learning outcomes should be continued to avoid recurrence.

The third recommendation provided was - to strengthen support for English language studies for students and staff. There are several activities mentioned in SAR (p. 104), implemented by RTU RA, e.g., the ESF SAM 8.2.2. project; different guest lecturers from the USA (BAFF programme), Fulbright scholars from the USA, international week with guest lectures, guest lectures in English during the academic year; English language improvement courses within the ERASMUS+ programme etc. But experts are still concerned it has not been enough to cover the whole target group. There were still students and teaching staff members met during onsite visit who did not feel comfortable speaking English and expressing themselves. This might influence their future capability to carry out research on the international level.

The fourth and final recommendation provided by experts for the RTA was - to increase the number of staff holding doctoral degrees. It is explained in the SAR (p. 104) that since 2012, 12 lecturers have obtained doctoral degrees and there are 3 more who have completed the doctoral theoretical course, received doctoral grants for the preparation of doctoral theses, and plan to defend their theses within a year. The good sign is that 5 of these PhD holders have graduated from the RTA doctoral study programme "Pedagogy" (now "Educational Sciences"). There is a significant increase in the number of PhD holders within the study field, and experts hope that the numbers are going up in the future.

Moving to the recommendations provided by accreditation experts to LiepU (now RTU LA) it is stated in SAR (p. 104) that renovation of study rooms should be performed to provide an engaging and flexible study environment. It was discovered by experts during the onsite visit that major improvements have been provided to auditoriums used for studies. Appropriate furniture and technical equipment, including multimedia equipment, has been installed ever since. Experts were provided by the demonstration of an E-learning environment (Moodle), which provides access to study materials, assignments, and information from home. All the target groups during the onsite visit were asked how they experienced the changes during the consolidation process. Students convinced the expert team that they were provided with precise information on how to start using RTU system ORTUS and they did not experience difficulties. Some of the teaching staff members said that at the beginning it took time to transfer the course information from LiepU LAIS system to RTU ORTUS system, but they said that technical help was provided by RTU. It was inspiring for the expert team to see that there are auditoriums in RTU LA devoted to the techniques and methodologies used in the study field programmes - e.g., Montessori, and in the areas of speech therapy.

It was also recommended to develop a research development plan to increase the volume and quality of academic staff research. Experts were informed and it is stated in SAR (p. 105) that an action plan for the implementation of LA strategy was developed and under the action until 2020. Now RTU LA's research strategy (until 2030) had been developed in accordance with RTU's comprehensive strategy, emphasizing excellence in research, innovation, and cooperation with the industry. But the most important contribution to support the research activities of teaching staff is

the number of hours included in the workload which is paid to support teaching staff in their research activities – publications, research projects etc. That was mentioned by all the teaching staff members – RTU RA and RTU LA. Although the amount is not significant still – this is a step forward to the right direction, in the opinion of expert team.

The last recommendation was connected to the cooperation with schools, implementing opportunities for professional communication between university lecturers and teachers. It is stated in the SAR (p. 105) that the emphasis has been put to the development of internships and voluntary work opportunities in educational institutions. During the onsite visit experts were told by teaching staff and students that also during study courses and seminars students are visiting the real education environment – schools and preschool education institutions which are located nearby. Employers approved that some of them are closely related to the RTU LA as they are part of the work of the State Examination Commission, and they provide feedback on the resources and quality of the study programme. (SAR, p. 105). Employers also admitted that they are interested in providing future students with mentorship at their educational institutions as they are interested in their well-being and motivation to stay in the occupation after graduation. Some of the teaching staff experts met during the onsite visit told that they are practicing at educational institutions, maintaining their professional competency within the professional field, connecting theory and practice. Experts have concluded that this recommendation has been fulfilled.

There have been recommendations provided (see SAR Annex "Report on the Implementation of Recommendations") during the process of licensing of the newly developed study programmes in 2020 (initiative by Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia within the framework of ESF project in 2017) over the reporting period and recommendations were received during the procedure for the inclusion of the study programme on the accreditation form of the study field. In 2020, RTA licensed and in 2022 included 6 study programmes in its study field, while LA (Liepaja University at that time) included 7 study programmes in its study field (SAR, p. 106). It is stated in SAR (ibid) that "The recommendations provided by the experts within the framework of the inclusion of study programmes in the study field accreditation page have been basically implemented". And they were formulated as "the main directions of action" (SAR, p. 106) for both of the structural units RTU LA and RTU RA: Collaboration with various institutions, including universities in Latvia and abroad; Incoming and outgoing mobility of students and academic staff; Student recruitment; Student involvement in scientific work; Evaluation of academic staff work quality; Use of open resources and development of modern technologies (SAR, pp. 106-108).

When analyzing the collaboration aspect and incoming and outgoing mobility of students and academic staff, experts can approve that many cooperation agreements with educational institutions were signed or renewed during the review period as seen in the SAR Annex 14 "List of cooperation agreements". The one conclusion can be drawn here based on the conversations with students during the onsite visit – there are study programmes where going to ERASMUS mobility or BIP is natural (e.g., bachelor level PhD level study programmes) but there are study programmes, especially short-cycle study programmes, where going abroad during studies is not going to happen, that is why the stress has to be put on visiting lecturers from abroad. Experts had a chance to meet students during onsite visit to RTU LA and those students had been using possibilities to get involved in gaining international experience actively and they remembered visiting lecturers as well, but there were less examples given by the students of RTU RA, so experts have the impression that this is an issue to recommendation to be implemented in the future as well searching to new opportunities for students of all the study programmes. The positive tendency had been discovered during the onsite visits that lecturers of RTU RA and RTU LA are willing to cooperate with each other in research, study content development etc.

Speaking about the recruitment aspect, it is stated in SAR (p. 107) that study programmes are constantly promoted to attract students and many examples given. Experts would like to point out that regional specificity should be considered although all procedures are going to be unified after

the consolidation process is implemented. There should be some kind of autonomy provided for RTU RA and RTU LA as their traditions and knowledge of the regional specificity is crucial. And this concerns also the group formation methodology – it is necessary to allow RTU RA and RTU LA to form groups of specialization out of a smaller number of students although it is not economically effective, but there is a necessity of specific study subject teachers to be provided for the job market.

There are two recommendations which could be analyzed in close relation “Opportunities provided for students to participate in scientific work” individually and together with lecturers and “Use of open resources and development of modern technologies” (SAR, p. 107 and 108). Experts were pleased to notice that after the consolidation process access to more database resources is provided from structural units of RTU RA and RTU LA as well from homes. All the target groups interviewed during onsite visits approved that. There were some examples given of students’ involvement in the teaching staff’s research projects and this must be widened not only on the level of PhD and master level study programmes but also on the level of bachelor level.

Speaking of modern technologies, experts were shown during the onsite visit that within study courses, students can work in the RTU RA Multisensory Room and the Social Pedagogy and Rehabilitation Technology Laboratory. Students have opportunities to develop ideas for using Photon and Lego robots. They learn to use warm sand in the pedagogical process and the Barboleta balance platform in the Special Pedagogy laboratory” and “RTU LA students can work in the Music Therapy Center (with music therapy instruments), Speech Therapy Laboratory (with speech therapy and Montessori pedagogy tools), and Speech and Voice Research Laboratory” (SAR, p. 108). All these environments and tools were demonstrated except for the Music Therapy Center. Experts also noticed that RTU RA premises were provided by excellent laboratories in STEM which is excellent and experts would encourage to use these laboratories even more – to widen the opportunities for students at primary school teachers to plan their research and use those technologies during the study courses. There is one aspect experts were thinking about – how to provide opportunities for all the students from both structural units to experience technological opportunities and specific methodologies developed there. There is no clear answer for that now, but that should be considered and researched.

During the onsite visit experts concluded that teaching staff of both structural units – RTU RA and RTU LA were informed about the procedures and criteria of evaluation of academic staff work quality. There were no objections to that.

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

The principles are reconciled for both structural units – RTU RA and RTU LA – to provide an internal quality assurance system for the study field “Education and Pedagogy” and the study programmes which are based on the RTU Quality Management System, including the RTU Quality Policy. Based on the Annex 18_Review of the implementation of the recommendations_EN.docx, it is concluded that recommendations have been implemented for study programmes and both structural units, except the fact that activities like the process of enhancing the incoming mobility of students is the ongoing long-term goal.

Strengths:

1. Cooperation and discussions about learning outcomes and the correspondence to the study programme objectives is usually initiated and organized by the study programme director, but the teaching staff is eager to develop and strengthen the cooperation within the RTU RA as well as with RTU LA.
2. There are several activities implemented by RTU RA to improve the level of English language competency of students and teaching staff.

3. There is a significant increase in the number of PhD holders within the study field, and experts hope that the numbers are going up in the future.
4. Major improvements have been provided to auditoriums used for studies. Appropriate furniture and technical equipment, including multimedia equipment, has been installed. There are auditoriums in RTU LA devoted to the techniques and methodologies used in the study field programmes – e.g., Montessori, and in the areas of speech therapy.
5. Teaching staff admitted that the most important contribution to support the research activities of teaching staff is the number of hours included in the workload which is paid to support teaching staff in their research activities – publications, research etc.
6. The cooperation with schools, implementing opportunities for professional communication between university lecturers and teachers has been developed and all the target groups recognized that the implementation forms have been widened and made more efficient.
7. Many cooperation agreements with educational institutions were signed or renewed during the review period, and RTU has widened the scope of opportunities for the RTU RA and RTU LA in that matter.
8. Access to more database resources is provided from libraries in structural units of RTU RA and RTU LA as well from homes after the consolidation process, which supports the research needs of students.
9. There is an excellent learning environment provided for STEM teachers and special pedagogy at RTU RA.
10. RTU LA has developed an excellent learning environment in speech therapy.

Weaknesses:

1. There is a need for continuous work in mapping of study programme and study course learning outcomes to avoid the recurrence.
2. Not all the students and teaching staff members feel comfortable expressing themselves in English and this might influence their future capability to carry out research on the international level.
3. The number of paid hours included in the workload of teaching staff, which is to support their research activities – publications, research projects etc., is still not enough and could be evaluated as a “seed money”.
4. As students of short-cycle study programmes are not willing to use the opportunity to study abroad using ERASMUS+ or BIP programmes, there are not enough opportunities provided for these students to listen to and cooperate with guest lecturers from abroad.
5. There is a concern if a certain level of autonomy is going to be provided in the future for RTU RA and RTU LA in the areas of student recruitment methodology and the group formation methodology, allowing them to form specialization groups out of smaller number of students to widen the opportunities for students to choose different study subjects.
6. There are just some cases of students getting involved in research projects together with teaching staff opportunities that should be widened.
7. Although there is an excellent learning environment provided for STEM teachers at RTU RA, there is doubt that all the opportunities are used during study courses and students’ research.

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

Although both RTU RA and RTU LA have put an effort to implement actions to fulfil the

recommendations provided by experts in the previous period of evaluation, there are still some aspects to focus on in the future and put even more effort as they influence the quality greatly, e.g., usage of research environment, international cooperation and continuous raising of English language competency.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

1. Support English courses both for the students and the teachers, as this might influence their future capability to carry out research on the international level, annually.
2. Continue the process of mapping of study programmes' and study course learning outcomes to avoid recurrence during the next academic year.
3. Provide a certain level of autonomy in the future for RTU RA and RTU LA in the areas of student recruitment methodology and the group formation methodology, allowing them to form specialization groups out of smaller number of students to widen the opportunities for students to choose different study subjects.
4. Encourage the teaching staff of the STEM area to develop more opportunities within their study courses for students to use the excellent learning environment provided for STEM teachers at RTU RA during the next academic year.
5. Align the application of the student surveys across both academies, whether they be voluntary or obligatory at both places, within 2 years time.
6. Invest in professional development activity for the staff to get familiarized with the general use and consequences of KPI's to foster their responsible and meaningful application, during the next academic year.
7. Invest in professional activities for the staff oriented on data literacy to use the full potential of PowerBI, and to allow for more in-depth analysis of the data available (e.g. student and graduate dynamics, graduate career paths, satisfaction, impact), during the next two academic years.
8. In view of the ongoing consolidation of RTU LA and RTU RA, RTU should prioritise the full harmonisation and consolidation of its internal Quality Management System by strengthening coordination, consistency, and staff capacity across all organisational levels in the forthcoming two years. While RTU's existing quality system is robust, strategically aligned, and compliant with European standards, its effectiveness in the post-merger context will depend on ensuring uniform implementation of procedures, feedback mechanisms, and performance management practices across all units.

Long-term recommendations

1. Increase gradually the number of paid hours included in the workload of teaching staff, which is to support their research activities – publications, research projects etc. within next 5 years.
2. As there are short-cycle study programmes where opportunities to study abroad using ERASMUS+ or BIP programmes are not going to be chosen by students, study programme management team has to offer more opportunities for these students to listen to and cooperate with guest lecturers from abroad within next 3 years.

3. Widen the opportunities for students getting involved in research projects together with teaching staff within next 5 years.

4. Improve the library environment in RTU LA, addressing ventilation system issues to secure a healthier study and research space for students and academic staff.

5. Ensure sustainability of regional teacher education, by introducing flexible funding and recruitment mechanisms that reflect demographic realities in Latgale and Kurzeme regions.

6. To further consolidate the organisational and communication procedures between RTU's central structure and the regional academies in Liepāja and Rēzekne to ensure efficient coordination and consistent study programme delivery.

II - "Preschool Teacher" ASSESSMENT

II - "Preschool Teacher" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The short cycle professional higher education programme "Preschool Teacher" (code 41141) belongs to the study field Education and Pedagogy and is fully compliant with its objectives, structure, and standards, as demonstrated by its alignment with the national Teacher professional standard, the clearly defined coherence between study programme aims, learning outcomes and admission requirements, the structured curriculum integrating pedagogy, psychology, methodology and extensive practise, as well as the detailed mapping of study courses to study programme-level outcomes. The study programme awards the professional qualification "Teacher" at EQF/LQF level 5, preparing competent and reflective specialists for work with children aged 1.5-7 years in preschools and early-childhood education settings (SAR, pp. 355-359).

The aim of the study programme is to prepare preschool teachers able to implement Latvia's competence-based curriculum, promote children's holistic development, and support inclusive education (SAR, pp. 356-357). The study programme's objectives and learning outcomes correspond to the national professional standard Teacher (LQF level 5) and RTU's strategic priorities for teacher education, as evidenced by the study programme's clear alignment with the competencies defined for preschool teachers in the national standard, the logical coherence between aims, objectives and course-level outcomes, the structured progression from theory to practise, and the detailed mapping demonstrating how each study course contributes to achieving the field-level learning outcomes.

The curriculum integrates pedagogy, psychology, language and literacy development, early-childhood methodology, and inclusive-education principles. Practice components ensure gradual acquisition of teaching competences from observation to independent classroom leadership (SAR, pp. 358-360).

The study programme is aligned with the Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027, ensuring consistency with Latvia's priorities for early-childhood education quality, digital literacy, and inclusion.

2.1.2. The "Preschool Teacher" study programme (code 41141) awards the professional qualification Teacher (EQF/LQF level 5) in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 322 and RTU's internal rules (SAR, pp. 361-366). The title, code, qualification, aims, and learning outcomes are coherent and interrelated, as demonstrated by the study programme's clear alignment with the national Teacher professional standard, the logical link between the stated aim, specific tasks and defined learning outcomes, and the structured curriculum - supported by course-to-outcome mapping and a

progressive practise system - that ensures students systematically acquire the competencies required in the study field.

The study programme aim is to prepare professional teachers able to design and implement pedagogical processes promoting the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development of preschool children. The learning outcomes include the ability to plan and evaluate learning activities, manage children's development, cooperate with parents, and apply inclusive and digital tools in early education. In the SAR it is explicitly demonstrated how each learning outcome operationalises elements of the study programme aim - for instance, outcomes on adapting learning content and planning child-centred activities directly reflect the aim of supporting holistic development, while outcomes related to collaboration with families, inclusive practise, and self-reflection correspond to the study programme's tasks and the competencies defined in the National Teacher professional standard.

The scope and duration of the study programme - 120 credit points (two years, full-time) — comply with national requirements for short-cycle professional higher education. The curriculum is structured to ensure a gradual transition from basic pedagogical theory to specialised early-childhood methodology and practical experience.

The language of implementation is Latvian, appropriate for the national preschool-education context, with supplementary English-language materials used for professional development and research literacy. On the other hand the exclusive use of Latvian as the language of instruction limits the programme's internationalisation potential by restricting the involvement of foreign academic staff, incoming exchange students, and multilingual learning elements, thereby reducing students' exposure to international pedagogical perspectives.

Admission requirements are clearly defined: applicants must have completed secondary education and demonstrate motivation and aptitude for pedagogical work.

2.1.3. During RTU's restructuring and integration of Liepāja Academy and Rēzekne Academy, targeted corrections were made to ensure the Preschool Teacher study programme aligns with RTU's unified quality-management model and the current Teacher professional standard (SAR, pp. 367–372).

Key improvements include:

1. Clarified learning outcomes, especially in digital pedagogy and inclusive education, which experts verified in the updated mapping tables and revised study course descriptions that more clearly link outcomes to content and assessment. Although digital tools are used in the study process, the programme lacks a clearly structured and explicitly articulated approach to developing digital teaching competences across programme aims, intended learning outcomes, and course alignment, which may lead to uneven competence acquisition;
2. Rebalanced credit distribution between theory, methodology, and practice to strengthen professional readiness, which experts confirmed through comparison of pre- and post-restructuring credit tables;
3. Revised assessment criteria ensuring uniform evaluation across implementation sites, which experts recognised as an improvement because the revised course content more clearly shows how learning outcomes are achieved and how course tasks are linked with study programme-level competencies;
4. Updated practical training guidelines to increase collaboration with preschools and improve supervision quality, which experts considered important for guaranteeing a coherent progression of professional skills and more consistent supervision across implementation sites;
5. Integration of RTU's EFQM-based quality framework into programme management, which experts observed in the unified procedures applied across RTU LA and RTU RA.

These corrections were validated by the Study Field Committee, approved by the RTU Senate, and

implemented with stakeholder consultation (SAR, pp. 370–372).

Therefore, interdisciplinary cooperation within RTU remains limited, which constrains the programme's ability to systematically integrate digital, technological, and creative expertise from other faculties and to fully realise its aims related to pedagogical innovation.

2.1.4. The “Preschool Teacher” study programme has clear economic and social justification, addressing Latvia's ongoing shortage of qualified preschool teachers, particularly in rural areas (SAR, pp. 373–381). The study programme plays a crucial role in supporting municipalities and national education policies aimed at improving early-childhood education quality and accessibility.

Cooperation with preschools, municipal education departments, and NGOs ensures that the study programme is responsive to labour-market and societal needs (SAR, pp. 375–376).

Student numbers have been stable, with steady intake in both implementation places (Liepāja and Rēzekne). The study programme attracts students from across Latvia, reflecting the regional demand for early-childhood specialists.

Graduate employability remains high - approximately 85% of graduates secure employment in preschools within six months of graduation, according to RTU's Career Centre and internal monitoring (SAR, pp. 378–379). Graduates report satisfaction with the professional preparation received and the quality of practical training.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The study programme “Preschool Teacher” (41141) demonstrates strong alignment with the study field (its aims, learning outcomes, and curriculum content correspond to the professional requirements and qualification level of preschool teachers), coherent structure (it ensures consistent achievement of the intended learning outcomes), social relevance (it meets current labour market and societal needs for qualified preschool teachers), and effective governance within RTU's unified quality-assurance framework (it ensures continuous monitoring and quality improvement).

Strengths:

1. The study programme distinguishes itself within the study field by providing a particularly coherent and practise-intensive structure, where the aims and learning outcomes are supported by constructivist pedagogical approaches.
2. The study programme responds directly to national and regional labour-market demand for preschool teachers; graduate employment exceeds 80 % within six months of graduation.
3. Long-standing partnerships guarantee practice placements, feedback loops, and regional engagement.

Weaknesses:

1. The study programme is implemented only in Latvian, which limits opportunities to strengthen the study programme's international dimension through foreign lecturers, exchange students, or multilingual study components.
2. Interdisciplinary integration within RTU is underdeveloped, as cooperation with other faculties (e.g., engineering, ICT, design) is limited, reducing the extent to which study programme aims related to digital and creative pedagogical innovation can be fully operationalised.
3. Although digital platforms support the study process, the study programme does not yet demonstrate a systematic and fully articulated approach to developing digital-teaching competences through its aims, learning outcomes, and course-to-outcome mapping.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. According to Cabinet Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard for Professional Higher Education" the content of the study programme in the amount of 120 CP consists of study courses for general knowledge acquisition (30 CP or 25 %) and sectoral study courses (54 CP), internships (24 CP and 20%) and qualification paper (12 CP or 10%). (SAR, p. 336 - 367). The content and scope of the study course and internship are developed "in accordance with the qualification to be obtained, in accordance with the standard of the teaching profession and the standard of professional higher education." (SAR, p. 367).

According to the Cabinet Regulation No. 716 ("Regulations Regarding the State Guidelines for Pre-school Education and the Model Pre-school Education Programmes") such study areas are represented in the study course content: linguistic, social and civic, cultural understanding and self-expression in art, technology, natural sciences, mathematics, health and physical activity (SAR Annex "Short cycle professional higher education study programme "Preschool Teacher" plan"), see study plan part B "Study courses relevant to the professional specialization of the field". You can find the study areas represented also in the "Early childhood pedagogical internship" (9 CP) 3rd semester, "Preschool teacher's pedagogical internship" (12 CP) 4th semester (SAR Annex "Continuity and relevance of internships to study content.pdf"). There are such courses as "Inclusive education" of total 6 CP, "Play and interdisciplinarity" of total 10 CP included in "Theoretical study courses in the field (area of professional activity) (SAR Annex "Study programme "Preschool Teacher" plan") which are "aimed at building student competence to plan and implement preschool pedagogical processes for the acquisition of children's transversal skills" (SAR, p. 367). The expert group agrees that the study content, the way it is structured, is topical and meets the needs of the industry, labor market.

To raise the competitiveness of students graduating this study programme, there is a purposeful planning performed as the transfer of the CP is purposefully planned - to offer graduates of the study programme "Pre-school teacher" an opportunity to continue their education in the first cycle (professional bachelor's) study programme "Primary Education Teacher" (SAR, pp. 368-369). The interconnection between study courses and internships can be seen in the SAR provided document "Annex "Continuity and relevance of internships to study content.pdf". When analyzing the learning outcomes (SAR Annex "Course_descriptions_PrSk.pdf"), it is concluded that study content is interconnected and complementary. It is stated in SAR (p. 369) that necessary updates can be done following the procedure described in the RTU Study Course Register. Students were asked during the onsite visit in RTU RA and RTU LA if they had a chance to influence changes in the study content of the programme/specific study course if they would like to. Some examples were given by students that teaching staff were very open to suggestions, they were willing to support the necessities of students, which usually occurred after returning from internships. During the onsite visit one student admitted that she used the opportunity to express her ideas in the survey provided by the study programme management. Teaching staff admitted that they inform study programme director about the necessary changes. When asked what the suggestion was, the student could not remember exactly, but, when the question about necessary additions or changes to the study programme content was asked to graduates and employers, the expert group received answers like - AI usage; project-based learning; adaptive learning. In some cases, students mentioned that a better balance between theory and practice in different study courses could be found. The expert group presumes that future collaboration around content and methods used in RTU RA and RTU LA should be promoted and organized by the study programme management.

It is stated in the SAR (p. 371) "in the content of the study programme, special attention is paid to the study courses of the content of the study areas, that are oriented towards the acquiring of methodologies of the learning content areas. The evaluation includes three criteria: 1) results of

intermediate assessments of the acquisition of study courses; 2) assessment of the internship manager and mentor in the areas of educational content; 3) final assessment of the study course and feedback". To achieve the learning outcomes of the study programme Mapping of the study courses/ modules had been performed (SAR Annex "Mapping_of_study_courses_PrSk.xlsx")

If looking back to the goal of the study programme: "To provide studies based on the theory and practice of educational sciences for the acquisition of professional qualifications by educating competent preschool teachers oriented towards professional development and lifelong learning" (SAR, p. 355), experts have concluded that the content of the study courses corresponds to the objectives of the study programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. The expert group values the fact that the study programme is available in full-time and part-time study formats. Considering the reality of lacking teachers at a national level, pre-school teachers as well, many students combine work and studies. In full-time intramural studies, the student's workload is – not less than 40 academic hours per week. In part-time extramural studies – less than 40 academic hours per week as a result the duration of studies in the part-time mode is longer than in the full-time mode. It is stated in the SAR (p. 372), that "Each academic year includes six on-site study weeks, during which classes are organized in an intensive format (full-day sessions)".

And there are two more forms of studies included to ensure the acquisition of study content, achieving the aim of the study programme and study outcomes: "A significant proportion of the programme content in part-time studies is acquired through independent work and via the e-learning platform" (SAR, p. 372). The expert group is delighted to acknowledge that "regular feedback in the following study week (or through consultations with lecturers on-site, online, or electronically), ensuring the immediate integration of theory and practice" (SAR, p. 372). During the onsite visit students approved that teaching staff provides a significant support for students considering their individual work duties.

Now under the umbrella of RTU, the Preschool Teacher study programme must be implemented with identical content at RTU LA and RTU RA to ensure a unified approach to the implementation of the study programme. Several principles have been described (SAR, p. 372): Centralised management of the study process; Unified study programme documentation; Coordination of academic staff activities; Unified assessment and learning outcomes monitoring system; Unified use of learning platforms and digital tools. The expert group considers the fact that it will take time to unify all the procedures as RTU LA has been a part of RTU for a longer time in comparison to RTU RA.

During the onsite visit the expert group concluded that teaching staff and study programme management is devoted and highly professional experts in the pedagogy area, in many cases they are closely related to the professional field willing to cooperate and are open to suggestions. A student-centered approach to the implementation of the study was seen in respecting the previous experience, interests of students, individual family/work conditions. Students admitted that teachers are welcoming and easily accessible when consultation is necessary, as well as "providing feedback and improvement of the study programme, at the same time encouraging to be independent and responsible in achieving study results" (SAR, p. 373). This approach encourages students to become professionally sensitive and open-minded to real-life situations in educational institutions. It is stated in the SAR (p. 373) and it was announced also during the onsite visit, that classes are also held directly in the preschool educational institution, practicing play classes and other forms of active learning to strengthen the contextual learning experience - "This method is applied in study courses, for example, Organization and management of the preschool pedagogical process, Play and interdisciplinarity, etc." (SAR, p. 373). When asked about the financing of this type of a practice, the expert group was answered that nearby institutions have been chosen for this purpose to

collaborate with, and it does not take a lot of time or money to organize those visits.

As most of the students have professional work experience in pre-school, it was revealed during the onsite visit in the discussions with teaching-staff and also with students (also in SAR p. 373), that discussions, group work, sharing individual experiences, project work are methods often used in study courses to value real life experience and support future teachers' reflection skills.

2.2.4. The study programme includes 3 internships: "1) Preschool Education Internship (3 ECTS) - The aim is to promote an understanding of the preschool educational institution as a microsystem - a place for children and adults to learn, be educated, and work - and its connection to other microsystems and society as a whole; 2) Early Childhood Pedagogical Internship (9 ECTS) - Aims to develop skills in observing, organizing, and leading activities for young preschool-aged children across various types of activities; 3) Preschool Teacher Pedagogical Internship (12 ECTS) - The goal is to implement and enhance professional competence in preschool education practice by organizing and leading the pedagogical process" (SAR, p. 375). The total amount of 24 CP is planned in accordance with the Cabinet Regulation No. 305. The organization of the internship is determined by the procedure for organizing the internship approved by RTU Senate Decision.

The interconnection between study courses and internships can be seen in the document provided with SAR "Annex "Continuity and relevance of internships to study content.pdf". When analyzing the learning outcomes (SAR Annex "Course_descriptions_PrSk.pdf"), it is concluded that study content is interconnected and complementary. To mention an example, researching the Preschool teacher's pedagogical internship (12 CP) in the 4th semester, one of the skills is "Integrates educational content into the pre-school pedagogical process". To be able to do that, students should acquire the content of different study areas in advance, covering all of the fields - language, cultural awareness and self-expression in the arts, technologies etc. That is why study courses offering the necessary study content are planned and implemented in the 3rd semester (SAR Annex "Plan_PresC_EN .pdf"). In order to ensure the internship, RTU LA has entered into a cooperation agreement with Liepaja state city municipal institution "Liepaja Education Authority", RTU RA has concluded 9 cooperation agreements with preschool educational institutions of the state city and region on cooperation. (SAR, p. 376). Students independently choose the place of internship, but if needed it is provided by the study programme director and/or the teaching staff responsible for pedagogical practice - internship coordinator of RTU LA and RTU RA.

The preparatory steps are provided before the internship - students and the mentor of the internship place are introduced to the purpose of the internship, the tasks to be performed and the procedure for evaluating the internship. During internships, students develop an individual internship report; later it is submitted for evaluation and presented at an internship defense seminar. Students have an opportunity to discuss and share their thoughts with the faculty-practice coordinator and group members. During the site visit, the expert group received confirmation that students stay in close contact with the teaching staff at RTU LA and RTU RA. During the discussion with employers, it was approved that students are supported by mentors in their institutions and support from higher education institutions is provided. Overall conclusions are made that connection between study content and tasks within study courses and internship is a positive tendency which ensures the effectiveness of the study process and invests in learning outcomes.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. In SAR (p. 378) it is stated that research topics for the qualification papers are defined "within the framework of internship by conducting a survey of preschool teachers, practice mentors and administration, thus exploring topicalities and problems in preschool education". There are topics given which have gained the interest of the expert group: "1) tools for the development of children's language, speech and literacy, 2) approaches to reducing children's aggressiveness, 3) methods for

promoting children's social and self-service skills, 4) realization of transversal skills in preschool life, 5) promotion of cooperation with parents within the fields of study, 6) opportunities for differentiation and individualization, 7) inclusive education, 8) health and opportunities for the promotion of physical development etc. Topics are important for the present situation in pre-school educational institutions. There are research topics connected with the usage of IT tools; different kinds of methods to promote the enhancement of different skills.

To support the development of research skills of future pre-school teachers there is a study course "Research in Education" of total 12 CP included in the study plan's A part. 24 CP is devoted to the development of the qualification paper (SAR Annex "Plan_PresC_EN .pdf").

The consolidation with RTU has provided both regional units with the most relevant and up-to-date scientific literature and sources from international data bases, where students can find the theoretical background concerning the problem of the chosen research. "The main criteria: the student's ability to analyze the latest insights about the problem being studied, the methodological proposal for the solution of the problem, the ability to evaluate the dynamics of the child's development. RTU RA average rating in defense of qualification papers 7.49; RTU LA - 7.15." (SAR, p. 379).

There are Methodological Instructions for the Development of Study Research Papers of RTU LA and RTU RA. It is important that employers are involved in the State Examination Commission.

There are several forms created to support students' research experience: opportunity to publish in the collection of methodological developments "Anthill of Idea", which was created as a result of cooperation between students and lecturers of RTA and LiepU before the consolidation was put into action; opportunity to present the results of the research at the students' international scientific-practical conference "CHILDREN. TEACHER. EDUCATION|", which is implemented in cooperation with the University of Latvia, Daugavpils University (SAR, p. 379).

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

All the study areas are represented in the study course content according to the Cabinet Regulation No. 716: linguistic, social and civic, cultural understanding and self-expression in art, technology, natural sciences, mathematics, health and physical activity which are aimed at building student competence to plan and implement preschool pedagogical processes for the acquisition of children's transversal skills. The expert group agrees that the study content, the way it is structured, is topical and meets the needs of the industry, labor market.

The expert group values the fact that the study programme is available in full-time and part-time study formats. Considering the reality of lacking teachers at a national level, pre-school teachers as well, many students combine work and studies.

The individualised approach encourages students to become professionally sensitive and open-minded to real-life situations in educational institutions.

The close connection between study content and tasks within study courses and internship is a positive tendency which ensures the effectiveness of the study process and invests in learning outcomes. Research topics or the qualification papers are important for the present situation in pre-school educational institutions.

It is wise to purposefully plan the possibility to offer the graduates of a short-cycle study programme to continue their studies in the first cycle professional bachelor's study programme. An individualized approach is used by the study programme management and teaching staff to support students who are combining their studies and work duties in part-time study form. Employers value this study programme as there is a necessity for qualitative pre-school education teachers in the area.

Strengths:

1. The study content, the way it is structured covering all of the study fields, is topical and meets the needs of the industry and labor market. This ensures that future pre-school teachers are methodologically prepared to introduce students at pre-school level for the future study process and content at school.
2. Graduates of the "Pre-school teacher" study programme are provided with the opportunity to continue their education in the first cycle professional bachelor's study programme "Primary Education Teacher".
3. The study programme is available in full-time and part-time study formats, which provides students with the opportunity to combine work and studies as many of the students are working at educational institutions already. The study programme management has provided students with different types of organisation forms (e.g., six onsite study weeks; opportunity for independent studies at the e-learning platform).
4. Teaching staff and study programme management is devoted and highly professional experts in the pedagogy area, in many cases they are closely related to the professional field willing to cooperate and are open to suggestions.
5. The connection between study content and tasks within study courses and internship is a positive tendency which ensures the effectiveness of the study process and invests in learning outcomes.
6. Research topics of the qualification papers are topical for the current situation in pre-school educational institutions.
7. The study programme integrates pedagogy, psychology, methodology, and extensive pedagogical practice in line with competence-based and inclusive-education principles.
8. In the study programme there are strong links between practise and coursework, and a carefully designed progression of skills that strengthens students' professional readiness beyond baseline standard requirements.

Weaknesses:

1. Some content updates within the study courses are lacking on topics like: AI usage; project-based learning; adaptive learning.
2. A better balance between theory and practice in different study courses is lacking.

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. Studies take place at the RTU RA training block at Atbrīvošanas aleja 115, in Rezekne; and RTU LA training block at Liela street 14, in Liepāja. Experts visited both buildings and saw that the material, technical, and financial provision comply with specific features and conditions for the implementation of the study programme. As the general analysis is already provided in chapter 1.3. Of this report, here the focus is mostly on this study programme. For the acquisition of practical skills in the RTU RA training corps, visual arts, sewing, design workshops, maintenance training laboratory and choreography hall can be used. According to the SAR (p. 381), the RTU LA Centre for Pedagogy and Social Work (PSDC) plays a leading role in the implementation of the study programme, providing an appropriate teaching staff and technical base. Experts visited the

Montessori-cabinet, and the Multisensory Room, which was installed in 2018, and is one of the most modern in the Baltic States. The high quality of facilities and innovative thinking are remarkable. Experts also visited the library in the RTU RA and RTU LA. Students have access to the RTU library and its regional units in Rezekne and Liepaja. The collection thematically corresponds to the study programme "Preschool Teacher". Of all the information resources available to the library, about 12% of the items in the collection are a topic of this study programme.

According to the SAR (p. 382), for the needs of the study programme "Preschool Teacher", databases offer information resources on various topics of the courses to be taught in the study programmes, for example, the EBSCO e-book collection contains approximately 28,000 electronic publications, connected to this programme.

In 2024, the databases and other digital resources available in the RTU LA library were used in 24,400 connection sessions. Experts were told by students both in the RTU LA and in the RTU RA, that they are pleased with the library-possibilities. The material and technical provision provided for the implementation of the study programme and its availability to students and teaching staff covers the needs for the study.

In RTU LA the library is open from 8.00 -19.00; there are about 65000 paper-books, 75% of them are on open shelves. Every day about 70 students visit the library, which is a good result, as in RTU LA there are about 1200 students. They have enough resources for the new books: about 15000 EUR per year. Also, final thesis can be found on open shelves from earlier years: now they are kept electronically only.

In Rezekne the library is open from 9.00 -17.00, but if needed, the times can be flexible. They can spend about 18000 EUR per year on literature, which they consider to be enough (for the education of about 6000.- EUR is available, but it is hard to fix it exactly, as many books can be used in different programmes).

The academies are united with RTU now, which means that the libraries are united, too: 15 databases are available already, before this number was only 4. Libraries welcome structural reform warmly. Also, students are happy: both in the RTU LA and RTU RA they use databases actively for free, and they can do it at home, too.

Experts saw that the facilities both in RTU RA and RTU LA create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process. As summary of the tours a conclusion can be formulated: in both academies' experts saw specific richness's:

Experts were told that the RTU RA is a kind of study center in this region in the context of physics, chemistry, health education and biology, as teachers from East-Latvian gymnasiums used to visit it for courses of additional education. In the RTU RA, there is a so-called 'creative attic' with extra possibilities for art students; 3D-printers are used in many courses and even by several schools in the community; science nights are very popular with about 400 participants in Rezekne. There are different exhibitions in buildings on campus. One building there was opened only 10 years ago, with a very modern environment and equipment.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3. According to the SAR (p. 383), the calculations of the planned costs of the RTU LA study programme "Preschool Teacher" for full-time studies for 2025/26 use the base costs determined in 2025 (EUR 1867.60 per one study place), and the coefficient of the thematic field of education is 1.1; the cost coefficient in first cycle professional higher education study programmes is 1.0. The Ministry of Education and Science fixes the coefficient. According to the SAR (p. 383), the costs per a study place are calculated as next:

- The cost of one study place in 2025 is EUR 2 054.36 per study year.
- The number of study places financed from the State budget in 2025/26 is 30.
- The tuition fee for full-time studies per academic year (2025/26) is EUR 2 310.
- The fee for part-time studies is EUR 2,100.

During the site visit experts asked students whether it is hard to pay the tuition fee, but there were no students in the panel, who had/have this kind of obligation. Obviously, there are enough state-funded places available on this programme.

In total, the study programme "Preschool teacher" covers 16% of the expenses of the study field "Pedagogy and Education":

- The total funding for the 2024/25 study field was EUR 1 293 634, and
- 5 % of the costs come from the study programme "Preschool teacher".
- On 01.03.2025, there were 107 students in this full-time study programme.
- 11 % of the costs consist of the study programme "Preschool teacher" (Part time).

In addition to the funding provided by the state for student scholarships, students up to 25 years of age, or who come from large families, or who have children, or who are orphans, or left without parental maintenance, or with group I or II disability, can apply for a social scholarship in the amount of 180.- EUR per month (SAR, p. 384). During the site visit, experts were told by students that the system of scholarships works well, and it is really easy to apply for it.

According to the SAR (p. 385, table 3.3.3.1.), in the RTU RA the costs from state budget funding and own revenue per student in a short-cycle study programme, are climbing. Tuition fee revenues are a significant addition to the programme revenues.

In addition to the funding for the implementation of the study programme, performance funding for the results in the provision of research-based higher education is used, which is not divided by study fields. It includes the financial resources allocated for the preparation of graduates and demonstrates the change of emphasis from quantitative to qualitative indicators and is an important indicator of the development capacity of the programme (SAR, p. 385).

The minimum number of students to start their studies in this study programme is 9 students part-time, and 7 students in full-time studies. The average number of students in one group is 10 students in part-time, and 16 students in full-time studies. Experts were told during the site visit in the RTU RA by teachers that the minimum number of students to open the course could be even 3, because Rezekne is small; the number of people decreases, which means fewer students. At the same time teachers and special educators are strongly needed, as there are not enough educational specialists.

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

According to the report, and the site visit, the facilities both in RTU RA and RTU LA enable students to achieve the learning outcomes in context of a high-quality study process in the best possible way. Students have access to the RTU library and its 15 databases (before the structural reform this number was only 4). The number of study places financed from the State budget in 2025/26 is 30, which is reasonable. The minimum number of students to start their studies is fixed: 9 in part-time, and 7 in full-time studies. The system of scholarships works well, and it is really easy to apply for it.

Strengths:

1. The facilities create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process: the possibility to use the RTU's databases is remarkable; specific centres (for example, the Montessori room) create additional, professional

value to the study programme.

2. The student-scholarships are available for many sub-groups.
3. The number of study places, financed from the State budget, is high enough.

Weaknesses: Not identified

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 material and technical provision provided for the implementation of the study programme, including the acquisition of mandatory and optional modules, has been developed with high quality. The facilities both in RTU RA and RTU LA create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a study process in the best possible way.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The Preschool Teacher study programme (41141) is implemented by a highly competent and experienced team of educators whose academic and professional qualifications fully comply with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and RTU's internal academic quality standards.

According to SAR 3.4.1. and Annex "List of academic staff _RTU LA_RTU RA", the study programme currently involves 21 academic staff members. According to SAR 3.4.1 among them, 19 (79%) hold doctoral degrees in pedagogy, psychology, or related fields, and the remaining hold master's degrees in early childhood or special education. This composition ensures that every course is led by a lecturer who meets both the academic and professional requirements defined in national legislation.

Analysis of Academic Staff CVs (SAR Annex - Academic Staff CV RTU LA_RTU RA) shows that the majority of lecturers (63%) have over 15 years of pedagogical experience, while 22% combine academic positions with leadership roles in educational institutions - including school principals, preschool heads, or municipal education experts. This structure creates a rich environment where theory and professional practice are interlinked.

The average age of the teaching staff is 52 years, which reflects significant professional maturity and sectoral expertise, though it also signals a need for long-term generational renewal. Several members are nationally recognized experts who have contributed to national curriculum development and policy formation.

In addition, many staff members have dual specializations - for example, combining early childhood pedagogy with psychology, speech therapy, or special education. This diversity allows the study programme to address the inclusive, interdisciplinary nature of modern preschool education, as required by Cabinet Regulation No. 305.

The SAR 2.3.5. emphasizes that all lecturers are selected according to defined criteria:

1. Compliance with qualification and language requirements;
2. Relevance of research or methodological activity to the study field;
3. Continuous professional development in didactics or teaching methodology;
4. Active participation in preschool institutions or applied research projects.

During the on-site visit, employers and students confirmed that the teaching team's expertise ensures direct integration of contemporary pedagogical practices into the academic process, particularly in inclusive education, creativity, and child-centered learning.

2.4.2. RTU ensures sustainability and quality of study programme implementation through a transparent and systematic recruitment and workload management process. Staff substitution or change is addressed through timely redistribution of teaching responsibilities among qualified lecturers within RTU LA and RTU RA. The process is coordinated by the RTU Human Resources Department and guided by the Methodology for Funding Distribution and Utilisation for RTU Structural Units (SAR 3.4.2).

Between 2021 and 2024, RTU LA and RTU RA experienced moderate but strategically planned changes in staff composition.

According to study programme SAR chapter 3.4.2. about the List of changes in the teaching staff made in the study programme, eight staff members (four in each academy) left the study programme (due to retirement, workload increase, or relocation), while six new lecturers were recruited to reinforce professional links with preschools and municipalities. Their combined 30+ years of management and teaching experience significantly strengthened the link between theory and practice.

In RTU LA, one PhD. assistant professor (16 years of experience in Latvian language education) and one Dr. paed. professor joined the programme to expand expertise in educational management and civic education.

Each recruitment followed open and transparent selection procedures. According to SAR chapter 3.4.1. the balance of positions (professors, associate professors, assistant professors, lecturers) remains stable.

To ensure a smooth transition, newly recruited lecturers are assigned mentors - senior staff who guide them through the first semester, review course syllabi, and supervise their first student cohorts. This mentoring system has been particularly effective in RTU RA, where two young lecturers have since successfully defended doctoral theses and advanced to assistant professor positions.

In 2022-2024, several new lecturers joined the study programme after completing doctoral or postdoctoral studies, bringing new expertise in early childhood learning technologies, and inclusion. The system of mentoring for new staff has been successfully implemented. During the on-site visit, participants confirmed that these staff changes have not disrupted study programme continuity; instead, they have broadened academic diversity and improved methodological innovation.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. All academic staff members fully comply with the legal requirement to demonstrate either publication activity or at least five years of professional experience (SAR 3.4.2). A considerable number of lecturers combine both criteria: long-term teaching experience and regular contributions to scientific or methodological publications: RTU Methodological Handbook on Early Childhood Development (2022), methodological guide for the Latvian Association of Early Childhood Educators (2023). Such activities bridge academic theory and practice and ensure that students gain exposure to real-life pedagogical challenges and best practices. Despite the Preschool Teacher study programme being professionally oriented, the academic staff maintain strong research productivity and involvement in national and international projects.

According to SAR Annex 13 - Scientific Publications by Academic Staff (RTU LA, RTU RA), staff members collectively produced more than 60 publications during 2019-2024, including 25 peer-reviewed articles and 9 monographs or textbooks.

The average output equals 2.5 publications per lecturer over the last three years, meeting the national requirement for higher education staff and illustrating active scholarly engagement.

Examples of notable publications and outputs include:

1. Monographs: Modern Personality Theories (2018); Developmental Psychology (2018); Transformative Digital Learning: Emerging Cases and Considerations (2021).
2. Textbooks and teaching tools: Human Sciences (Psychology) (2022); Pedagogical Competences for Sustainable Development (2023).
3. Conference papers: presented at Child. Teacher. Education (Latvia, annually), Education for

Sustainable Development (Lithuania, 2023), Nordic Early Childhood Conference (Finland, 2022).

RTU RA's academic staff are active participants in national research programmes, such as:

1. VPP-IZM-Education-2023/1-0001 ("Individualised and Personalised Support System for Pupils' Literacy and Numeracy");
2. VPP-LETONIKA-2021/4-0002 ("New Solutions in the Study of Demography and Migration Processes");
3. IzVeTSKKEI Fundamental Research Project ("Transformation of Educational Values for Cultural and Economic Growth").

RTU LA staff participate in numerous Erasmus+ and Nordplus projects, including:

1. INTEC - Developing an Innovative In-service Training Model for ECEC Staff (2023-2026);
2. TeCCh-Ed - Designing a Technology-enhanced Climate Change Education Curriculum (2022-2024);
- ProuD to Teach All (2020-2023);
3. ArtWIN - Art Welcomes Inclusion through Innovative Technologies (2021-2024).

In addition, 16 teaching staff members (8 from LA, 8 from RA) took part in academic mobility between 2022 and 2024 (SAR Annex 17 - Statistical Data on Academic Staff Mobility), with visits to universities in Finland, Poland, Sweden, Lithuania, and Germany.

Two guest lecturers from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) and USA taught modules in 2022 and 2024 respectively, reinforcing the study programme's international dimension.

Employers confirmed during the on-site visit that graduates demonstrate excellent preparedness for the labour market, owing to the teachers' ability to translate research and field experience into practical training sessions. To enhance efficiency, it may be advisable to further streamline reporting tools and expand the dedicated research hours beyond the current 40 hours per academic year.

2.4.5. According to SAR chapter 3.4.5. collaboration among teaching staff is an essential factor in study programme quality and is aligned with the ESG2015 principle that quality is the result of the interaction between teachers, students, and the learning environment.

Cooperation operates on two structural levels:

1. Intra-academy collaboration - joint teaching within a single campus;
2. Inter-academy collaboration - coordinated course planning between RTU LA and RTU RA.

On-site visit confirmed that every course in the study programme is co-taught by at least one lecturer from RTU LA and one from RTU RA. A lead lecturer coordinates the content, methodology, and assessment to ensure unified standards. This collaboration happens via MS Teams, ORTUS, and Moodle platforms, with shared digital resources and e-course templates. Key examples include:

1. The course "Content and Learning Approaches in the Arts", co-taught by RTU LA and RTU RA lecturers with specialisations in music and visual arts;
2. The annual methodological seminar "Research in Education", where staff discuss assessment strategies and research supervision;
3. The "Anthill of Ideas" (Ideju pūznis) project, which compiles student methodological works under joint faculty supervision;
4. Interdisciplinary research conference "Child. Teacher. Education", co-organised by both

academies since 2017.

According to SAR chapter 3.4.1. professional development is systematically supported through RTU's Centre for Academic Excellence. During the reporting period, more than 70% of lecturers participated in courses such as Artificial Intelligence in the Pedagogical Process, Assessment Training for Teaching Staff, and Academic Integrity. Seven staff members completed English for Academic Purposes training, and eight completed advanced courses in leadership and communication, though it is advised to involve more academic staff into ESL courses.

According to SAR chapter 3.4.5. the collaboration model also fosters mentoring: newly hired staff receive support from senior professors, while experienced lecturers co-author research papers with younger colleagues. This not only ensures succession but also promotes the internal culture of reflective teaching and peer feedback.

According to SAR Annex 12, the full-time equivalent (FTE) ratio of students to teaching staff is 11:1, which is more favourable than both the Latvian national average (14:1) and the OECD short-cycle average (16:1) (Education at a Glance 2024, p. 364). This allows for individual mentoring, continuous supervision during pedagogical practice, and personal academic feedback - a feature highly appreciated by students during the on-site visit.

Workload allocation follows RTU's internal regulations and is recorded in ORTUS.

Each academic's teaching, research, and administrative duties are clearly defined and reviewed annually.

During the on-site visit it was stated by the teachers that integration into RTU's system has improved fairness and recognition of research hours. However, they also noted that administrative demands (especially reporting through digital systems) have increased.

Cooperation among teaching staff is well-developed and structurally supported. Academic cooperation extends to student supervision, scientific conferences, and shared professional development workshops.

During the on-site visit, lecturers from both academies emphasised that regular academic discussions, course coordination, and shared supervision of practice significantly strengthen the unity of the study programme. The collaborative environment also fosters the use of innovative learning technologies and AI-supported learning materials, which students reported as highly beneficial.

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

The Preschool Teacher study programme is delivered by an academically qualified and professionally active teaching staff whose composition, research, and cooperation clearly meet ESG standards. The team's strengths lie in its extensive professional experience, strong pedagogical expertise, and active participation in applied research and international collaboration.

The cooperation model between RTU LA and RTU RA ensures harmonised academic quality and supports a shared pedagogical culture rooted in evidence-based and inclusive education. Continuous professional development and participation in international projects enhance the programme's quality, while the favorable student-staff ratio guarantees individualised learning and mentoring. Nonetheless, further measures are recommended to address the ageing profile of staff and to expand incentives for publications in internationally indexed journals.

Strengths:

1. 79% of teaching staff hold doctoral degrees; 63% have over 15 years of pedagogical experience.
2. Balanced academic structure (professors, associate and assistant professors, lecturers, guest lecturers).
3. Strong integration of academic theory and preschool practice.

4. Active research and publication output with participation in national and international projects.
5. Excellent student-staff ratio (11:1) and individual student support.
6. High engagement in professional development and mobility (16 teachers in Erasmus+/Nordplus).

Weaknesses:

1. Age structure of staff indicates need for generational renewal.
2. Limited time allocated for research within the workload.
3. Uneven distribution of publication activity across staff.
4. Administrative workload increased due to digital integration.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Preschool Teacher study programme staff fully comply with national and institutional qualification requirements. All teaching staff hold relevant degrees in pedagogy or related fields, supported by research achievements and extensive professional practice.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education", and the SAR annex "Annex_Compliance with National standart_PrSk.pdf" provides the detailed mapping that demonstrates this compliance and serves as the basis for the experts' evaluation.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme is compliant with the professional standard "Teacher" (approved on 12 June 2020), and the SAR annex "Annex_Conformity_profession standard_PrT_EN.docx" provides the detailed evidence and mapping that experts used to confirm this compliance.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study course descriptions (SAR Annex "Annex_Course_descriptions_PrSk.pdf") are prepared in Latvian. Descriptions comply with regulations outlined in the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The provided Diploma sample (SAR Annex "Diploma_diploma pielikuma paraugi Pirmsskolas skolotajs LV_ENG.pdf") complies with the procedure by which state-recognized documents of higher education are issued in accordance with Cabinet regulations No.202 "Procedure for Issuing State-Recognised Higher Education Qualification Documents".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The attached resumes of staff (SAR Annex "Confirmation - knowledge of the foreign language.edoc") and confirmation (SAR Annex "Confirmation - knowledge of the state language.edoc") verifies that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet Regulation No. 733 "Regulations on the Scope of State Language Proficiency, the Procedure for the State Language Proficiency Examination, and the State Fee for the Language Proficiency Examination".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Sample of the attached study agreement (SAR Annex "Sample of study agreement.zip")

complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Mandatory Provisions to Be Included in the Study Agreement".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The attached contract (SAR Annex "Agreement with the University of Latvia on continuing education (in Latvian).edoc") confirms that the institution provides the possibility to continue studies in the University of Latvia in the study programme "Preschool Teacher".

- 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

RTU confirmation (SAR Annex "Confirmation - on compensation for losses.edoc") 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 university (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: Fully compliant

The attached annex (SAR Annex "Annex_Compliance with MK not_569_Presc_ENG.docx") confirms that the study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers' regulations no. 569.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme fully complies with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

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

The Preschool Teacher study programme is implemented by a highly competent and professionally experienced academic team that ensures strong integration between theory and early childhood pedagogical practice. The staff's scientific and methodological activities, including participation in international conferences and Erasmus+ projects, support continuous improvement and innovation in teaching. During the last six years, academic staff have produced more than 80 scientific

publications, with 16 appearing in journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science (including Q2-Q3 categories). The cooperation between RTU LA and RTU RA enhances methodological consistency and broadens the learning environment for students. Joint teaching and research initiatives demonstrate a well-functioning collaboration model. Minor challenges remain, primarily related to balancing research time and harmonising feedback procedures between RTU LA and RTU RA. However, these issues are being addressed institutionally through professional development, mentoring, and shared KPI use. The study programme plays a crucial regional role, offering access to higher education for future preschool teachers in western (Liepāja) and eastern (Rēzekne) Latvia, where demographic challenges and teacher shortages are most pronounced. By maintaining strong local partnerships with preschools and municipalities, RTU LA and RTU RA help sustain the quality and continuity of early childhood education provision across regions. Overall, the Preschool Teacher study programme demonstrates high academic quality, effective cooperation, and significant regional relevance for teacher education in Latvia.

Graduates of the “Pre-school teacher” study programme are provided with the opportunity to continue their education in the first cycle professional bachelor's study programme "Primary Education Teacher". The study content of the Programme, the way it is structured, is topical and meets the needs of the industry and labor market. The connection between study content and tasks within study courses and internship is a positive tendency which ensures the effectiveness of the study process and invests in learning outcomes although some content updates within the study courses are lacking on topics like: AI usage; project-based learning; adaptive learning.

The material and technical provision provided for the implementation of the study programme, including the acquisition of mandatory and optional modules, has been developed with high quality. The facilities both in RTU RA and RTU LA create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a study process in the best possible way.

Evaluation of the study programme "Preschool Teacher"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Preschool Teacher"

Short-term recommendations

1. Implement content updates within the study courses on topics like: AI usage; project-based learning; adaptive learning till the next academic year.
2. Increase a better balance between theory and practice in different study courses till the next academic year.

Long-term recommendations

1. Extend the allocated research time for academic staff (currently 40 hours per year) to enable meaningful engagement in research and international publication activities.
2. To expand cooperation with other RTU faculties to promote interdisciplinary and innovative pedagogical projects that integrate educational technology and creative practices.
3. To increase the level of internationalisation by offering selected study courses or modules in English, or by enhancing the participation of visiting lecturers and exchange students to strengthen intercultural and academic diversity.

4. To implement a systematic approach to developing students' digital-teaching competences and to strengthen the use of technology – enhanced learning across all study courses.

5. To further consolidate the organisational and communication procedures between RTU's central structure and the regional academies in Liepāja and Rēzekne to ensure efficient coordination and consistent study programme delivery.

II - "Speech Therapy" ASSESSMENT

II - "Speech Therapy" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The first cycle (professional bachelor) higher education programme “Speech Therapy” (code 42141) belongs to the study field Education and Pedagogy and, as confirmed by the experts, complies fully with its aims, structure, and professional standards. This conclusion was based on the experts' review of the study programme's clearly structured learning-outcome system, the documented alignment of course content with the Speech Therapist and Teacher professional standards, and the coherent progression of pedagogical, linguistic, psychological, and clinical competencies evident across the curriculum. The programme prepares graduates for the qualification Teacher-Speech Therapist (EQF/LQF level 6), integrating pedagogical, linguistic, psychological, and medical knowledge in line with the Latvian Teacher and Speech Therapist professional standards.

The aim of the study programme is to prepare highly qualified speech therapists capable of preventing, identifying, and correcting speech and language disorders in children and adults (SAR, pp. 165–166). The study programme combines theoretical pedagogy with applied clinical training and communication-development strategies. Its objectives and learning outcomes reflect national priorities in inclusive education and lifelong learning, as evidenced to the experts by the study programme's emphasis on early intervention, support for learners with diverse communication needs, the inclusion of special education needs focused modules, and the structured development of competencies related to diagnostic, preventive, and corrective work in line with national policy documents..

The curriculum links educational and clinical aspects of speech therapy, encompassing general pedagogy, developmental psychology, linguistics, anatomy and physiology of speech, special-needs education, and professional practice. This interdisciplinary approach ensures that graduates can work effectively in preschools, schools, rehabilitation centres, and hospitals (SAR, pp. 167–170).

The study programme is implemented within RTU's unified EFQM-based quality system and aligns with the Education Development Guidelines 2021–2027 and National Development Plan 2021–2027.

2.1.2. The Speech Therapy study programme (code 42141) awards the professional bachelor's degree in Speech Therapy and a qualification of Teacher-Speech Therapist at EQF/LQF level 6, in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 322 (SAR, pp. 168–173). The title, qualification, and degree are internally coherent, reflecting the dual pedagogical and clinical orientation of the profession, which the experts verified through the study programme's integration of pedagogical sciences with medical-clinical subjects, the inclusion of extensive diagnostic and correction-focused practice periods, and the clearly structured thematic groups that combine education, linguistics, psychology, anatomy, and speech-language pathology.

The aim of the study programme is to provide graduates with pedagogical, linguistic, and clinical competences required to assess and treat speech and language disorders across all age groups

(SAR, pp. 170–174). The learning outcomes are logically structured and measurable, addressing knowledge, professional skills, and general competences aligned with EQF level 6 descriptors, which the experts confirmed through the detailed mapping of outcomes to study courses, the clear progression of competences across the seven thematic groups, and the explicit linkage between learning outcomes and clinical practise requirements presented in the programme documentation. . The duration of studies is four years (240 credit points), consistent with national regulations for first cycle (professional bachelor's) study programmes. The experts found the curriculum to be well balanced, noting that it effectively combines general pedagogical and medical-science courses with professional methodology and extended clinical practice, ensuring a coherent progression from theoretical foundations to specialised professional competences. In the context of modern speech therapy and contemporary pedagogical practice, the integration of digital tools and assistive technologies has become increasingly important. Although the study programme makes use of digital platforms for communication and organisational purposes, the systematic inclusion of these technologies within the study content remains an area requiring further development. While digital platforms such as Moodle, MS Teams, and the RTU e-environment are used for organisational purposes and communication, the systematic integration of digital and assistive technologies into the curriculum remains limited. The study programme documentation highlights the use of literature, methodological resources, and practical training, but does not demonstrate consistent methods essential for contemporary speech therapy practice. As demand grows for specialists who can work in digital health settings and provide remote therapeutic support, these technologies become a core component of professional competence. The evidence presented in the SAR reflects progress in this area, yet experts concluded that more structured integration is needed to fully meet current professional requirements and strengthen students' digital preparedness.

The language of implementation is Latvian, justified by the target profession's national context. English-language literature and Erasmus+ mobility provide some international exposure. Admission requirements are transparent: completion of secondary education and compliance with RTU Senate regulations. Although the study programme provides access to English-language literature and offers students the possibility to participate in Erasmus+ mobility, the overall level of internationalisation remains limited. The documentation does not indicate sustained engagement in international academic networks, significant mobility flows, or involvement of foreign lecturers in the study process. Since the programme is delivered exclusively in Latvian, it can not attract incoming international students without English-taught course offerings. Furthermore, while individual students may use mobility opportunities, the study programme does not include integrated international modules or joint learning activities, that would enhance comparative pedagogical perspectives or the development of intercultural competences. These aspects show that, although basic requirements are met, the international dimension is not yet developed in a structured or strategic way.

2.1.3. Following RTU's structural reform and the integration of Liepāja Academy and Rēzekne Academy, the Speech Therapy study programme underwent targeted corrections to harmonise quality standards and academic processes (SAR, pp. 180–186).

The main corrections included:

1. Revision of learning outcomes to ensure alignment with the updated professional standard and EQF descriptors.
2. Adjustment of course sequencing to strengthen the link between linguistic theory and clinical application.
3. Expansion of professional practice in collaboration with preschools, schools, and rehabilitation centres.
4. Enhancement of the research-methodology component, improving students' evidence-based decision-making skills.

All corrections were approved by the Study Field Council and RTU Senate following stakeholder consultations (SAR, pp. 182-185). The experts confirm that these modifications are justified, transparent, and improve study programme quality.

2.1.4. The Speech Therapy study programme has a clear and well-founded social and economic justification (SAR, pp. 187-198). Latvia faces a nationwide shortage of speech therapists in preschools, schools, and rehabilitation centres, as documented by the Ministry of Education and Science. The study programme directly addresses this labour-market need by preparing specialists with pedagogical and clinical competences relevant to inclusive education and health support. Cooperation with municipal education departments, hospitals, and special-education institutions ensures practice opportunities and direct employment pipelines for graduates (SAR, pp. 189-191). Student numbers have been stable over the last five years, with gradual increases in enrolment after 2022. The study programme attracts both secondary-school graduates and adult learners retraining from other professions. From the 2020/2021 to the 2024/2025 academic year, the number of students in the study programme has almost tripled, rising from 65 to 190, mainly due to the introduction of part-time studies. Full-time first-year enrolment remained stable at 14-19 students annually (82 in total), while part-time first-year enrolment increased from 17 to 41 students (150 in total). Altogether, 232 students began their studies in the first year, with 10 joining later, and 34 students from the previous study programme version were transferred into the new one. The strong admission dynamics and student survey results indicate that the programme is competitive and valued for its quality.

Graduate employability exceeds 85 % within six months of completion of studies. Most graduates work in preschools, schools, or rehabilitation centres, with some continuing to master's-level studies in education or speech therapy (SAR, pp. 195-196). During the site visit employers express high satisfaction with graduates' professional preparedness, communication skills, and applied-research orientation.

Although the documentation reports high employability rates (over 90% of graduates work in the field), graduate tracking currently relies on individual employer feedback and occasional information provided by graduates themselves, rather than on a structured and methodologically consistent monitoring system. The SAR does not provide evidence of regular graduate surveys, long-term career data collection, or systematic cooperation with employers to gather information on professional development, qualification relevance, or continuing education pathways. The absence of long-term data limits the study programme's capacity to evaluate its sustained impact, identify emerging labour-market requirements, and plan evidence-based programme improvements. Therefore, experts consider that implementing a comprehensive and regular graduate-tracking system would significantly strengthen programme quality management and strategic planning.

But there is still one troubling aspect. This study programme is ensured just in the structural unit of RTU LA, and it is quite clear that students graduating from this study programme are basically providing the necessities of the nearby regions and the Latgale region is not going to be provided. Students are connected to their work/family relations and very rarely they would be willing to move to other places because of their job. When discussing the methodological aspects and organizational forms to ensure the study programme at RTU RA - the expert group received a strict "no, it is not possible". Still thinking in the long-term to ensure the future of the study programme the expert group would like to suggest considering this as an opportunity.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The Speech Therapy study programme (code 42141) complies with the requirements of the study

field Education and Pedagogy. It is coherent, professionally and socially relevant, and effectively managed within RTU's quality-assurance framework. The study programme prepares competent, practice-oriented specialists who address Latvia's national demand for speech and language professionals. Minor improvements are recommended in internationalisation, digital-practice integration, and long-term graduate tracking.

Strengths:

1. The study programme not only aligns with the aims and qualification requirements of the Education and Pedagogy field but exceeds them by integrating a uniquely interdisciplinary structure that combines pedagogy, linguistics, psychology, and clinical speech-language pathology, thereby offering broader professional preparation than the minimum standards require.
2. Strong interdisciplinary foundation combining pedagogy, linguistics, psychology, and clinical practice;
3. Socially and economically justified by consistent national demand for speech therapists;
4. High employability rate (>85 %) and positive employer feedback.

Weaknesses:

1. Integration of telepractice, digital health tools, and innovative pedagogical technologies remains limited;
2. Graduate career-tracking and quantitative impact analysis not yet systematic;
3. Limited internationalisation — few English-taught modules.
4. The study programme is implemented only in RTU LA that limits the possibilities to provide job market with qualified specialists all around Latvia.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. It is stated in the SAR (p. 180) that the content of the study programme "Speech Therapy" provides a set of knowledge, skills and competences necessary for the performance of professional activities, according to the understanding of the essence of the profession of speech therapist in Latvia and the European Union. To ensure this the content of the study programme is developed based on the standards set by European Speech and Language Therapy Association (the ESLA standard).

The structure of the study programme includes 240 CP (ECTS) - part A (84 CP) consists of Humanities and social sciences courses; Theoretical study courses in the field, part B (90 CP) consists of Professional specialization study courses, part C (9CP) includes optional courses. There are 7 internships (39 CP), bachelor Thesis in speech therapy (15 CP) and qualification examination (3CP) (SAR, Annex "9_Study_plan_Speech Therapy_FT_PT_2025.xls").

In SAR (p. 180) it is specified that "During the studies, it is planned to study in seven thematic groups:

1. Thematic group I - Basic Issues of Speech Therapy (1st and 2nd semester);
2. Thematic group II - Speech Therapy for Children (3rd semester, separate study courses related to this thematic group are included in the 4th and 6th semesters);
3. Thematic group III - Audiology and Voice Disorders (4th semester, separate study courses related to this module are included in the 1st and 2nd semesters);
4. Thematic group IV - School Speech Therapy (5th semester);
5. Thematic group V - Complex Functional Disorders (semester 6, separate study courses related to this module are included in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th semesters);
6. Thematic group VI - Clinical Speech Therapy (7th semester);
7. Thematic group VII - Final Thematic Group in Speech Therapy (8th semester, final internship,

development and defence of a bachelor's thesis, qualification exam in speech therapy).”

Quite a wide range of legal framework has been considered when formulating the objectives, developing the study content and formulating the learning outcomes of the study programme: the Latvian Qualification Framework (LQF), the Profession Standard of a Speech Therapist (2020), the requirements for professional qualification of a Teacher-Speech Therapist (2020) and the job description of a Teacher-Speech Therapist (profession code 2352 01). The language content and methodology courses are based on the guidelines developed by the project "Competency-based Approach to Learning Content". Compulsory (general education) and certain theoretical and professional specialisation courses in the field are also in line with the Teaching Profession Standard (2020) (SAR, pp. 179 - 180).

When defining the learning outcomes of study courses, several principles are applied: principle of succession; principle of compliance; principle of transparency; principle of regular review (SAR, p. 181), e.g., during the onsite visit it was clarified that students are provided with the opportunity to visit educational institutions within the study courses even before they go for the internship, so the students can observe the specialists of the field in the real-life environment.

The expert group had an opportunity during the onsite visit to observe that teaching staff are highly motivated professionals of the field, which is an important factor to ensure the quality of the study content delivered. Students when asked could not mention if there was any study course which was unnecessary.

Very close relationship was discovered between study content of the study courses and tasks assigned for the internships when discussing with target groups and also researching the documentation (SAR, Annexes "Internship_Speech therapy_2025.zip"; Study course descriptions). Simulation of situations or case analysis in the study process is used in the study courses to prepare students before the practice, enhances the students' skills to solve problem situations in practice, promotes reflection and self-evaluation.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. It is stated in the SAR (pp.183-184) that the content of studies is aimed at the unity of theory and practice; studies are closely related to scientific topicalities in speech therapy. Methods used - lectures, seminars, discussion, individual, pair and group work, practical work, laboratory work, situation simulations, case analysis, independent work, etc. During the onsite visits it was clarified by students and teaching staff that the study process is focussed on strengthening the practical experience, as well as to promote the unity of theory and practice. Professionals are invited to teach separate study courses (e.g., preschool speech therapy, clinical speech therapy), examples of good practices were offered for discussions in practical seminars. It was possible to detect during the onsite visit when speaking to students that student-centred teaching and learning is applied when considering and respecting the diversity of students and their needs as there are a lot of students who already work in the field. The student's independence and responsibility is promoted involving students in providing feedback for the study courses and study programme as a whole. Students feel heard and respected; their mutual collaboration is promoted, and individual work and life experience valued.

There is an example provided in SAR (p. 185) - in order "to strengthen the contextual learning experience, classes are also held directly at the RTU LA Speech Therapy Centre both by observing the classes led by the teaching staff and by acquiring initial practical skills in the correction of speech and language disorders."

There are several principles applied to ensure the goals set for the study programme - flexibility, interconnection between study content and work environment; provision of feedback and self-reflection; CLIL approach etc. Also the expert group was impressed by how many visiting professors

were named by graduates and students.

2.2.4. According to the SAR (“Annex_Internship_Speech therapy_2025.zip”) the internship is carried out in the amount of 39 CP (total) to cover all the areas in which a speech therapist could work after graduation, and after the researching of the content of each type of internships, it was clear that the principle of succession is considered taking into account what type of study courses had been acquired:

1. Speech Therapy Internship I (Organisation of Speech Therapy Work) - 2nd semester,
2. Speech Therapy Internship II (Speech Therapy for Children) - 4th semester,
3. Speech Therapy Internship III (Audiology) - 4th semester,
4. Speech Therapy Internship IV (School Speech Therapy) - 5th semester,
5. Speech Therapy Internship V (Complex Function Disorders) - 6th semester,
6. Speech Therapy Internship VI (Clinical Speech Therapy) - 7th semester,
7. Speech Therapy Internship VII (Final Internship in Speech Therapy) - 8th semester.

As it is stated in the SAR (p. 187) “The student independently searches for a place of internship that corresponds to the content of the internship and agrees on its implementation by concluding a tripartite agreement.” If necessary, support by RTU LA is provided. During the onsite visit when meeting target groups it was concluded that support is provided before student goes to internship, he/she is supported during the internship, and the reflection and analysis process is ensured after the internship is concluded. There is a final conference organised after each internship to share the experiences, main outcomes.

During the onsite visit employers admitted that the connection between students and RTU LA teaching staff is ensured, and support is provided as well as the mentorship is provided in the educational institution - students are encouraged to ask questions to the teaching staff also during the internship periods if they feel unsure or confused, and the expert group was assured that answers are received on a short notice.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. There are several study courses included in the study programme to help students enhance their research skills before the actual development of Bachelor's Thesis is taking place. And they are - "Research in Education" (2 CP, 3rd semester), "Social Anthropology" (2 CP, 5th semester), "Research in Speech Therapy I, II, III, IV, V," (11 CP, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 8th semester) (SAR Annex “Annex_9_Study_plan_Speech Therapy_FT_PT_2025.xls”) which includes the development of three study theses, as well as the development and defense of a bachelor's thesis (15 CP, 8th semester).

Other study courses also develop students' scientific competence as students are encouraged to elaborate materials/research papers which could be useful in the elaboration of their Bachelor's Thesis. That was confirmed by students during the onsite visit.

In the reporting period 32 full-time students and 8 part-time students have graduated from the study programme (SAR, p. 189). Topics researched relate to the field: Organization of the work of a speech therapist; Children speech therapy; Audiology and voice disorders; School speech therapy; Complex function disorders; Clinical speech therapy; Other/mixed range of topics (bilingualism, early development speech therapy, smart devices and language, impact of Covid-19, etc.) (SAR, p.189).

It can be concluded that research topics of bachelor's theses cover both all thematic circles of speech therapy and individual study interests of students as they are related to their work experience.

When analyzing the course descriptions (SAR, Annex “Study course plans_Speech Therapy_2025.docx”), the expert group paid attention to the recommended literature for the study courses focusing on the enhancement of research competence of students. Experts see that

literature in English is also included in the list of mandatory literature but the expert group believes that it is necessary to enhance students' skills to read books and articles on research skill and data analysis in foreign languages (as there are much less in Latvian) and sources analyzing international research data on their research topic. There are some good sources provided in the list of "Additional literature", though. Experts also must admit that students told during the onsite visit that they are encouraged by their teaching staff to read sources from data bases.

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

The professional bachelor's study programme "Speech Therapy" is unique in the higher education study programme area in the field of Education and Pedagogy and it is highly valued by graduates and employers. The content of the study programme is developed based on the standards set by European Speech and Language Therapy Association (the ESLA standard). Basic and specialised thematic groups are provided covering the main necessities of the educational institutions, e.g., Basic Issues of Speech Therapy; Speech Therapy for Children; Audiology and Voice Disorders; School Speech Therapy; Complex Functional Disorders; Clinical Speech Therapy.

Strengths:

1. There is a clear and purposeful interconnection detected between study courses, internship and research activities that ensures the quality of the qualification provided.
2. To ensure the goals set for the study programme several principles are implemented - flexibility, interconnection between study content and work environment; provision of feedback and self-reflection; CLIL approach etc.
3. The internship covers all the areas in which a speech therapist could work after graduation.
4. Research topics of bachelor's theses cover both all thematic circles of speech therapy and individual study interests of students as they are related to their work experience.
5. Employers highly value the graduates and students already entering the job market for their competence and support provided by RTU LA.
6. Students value the quality of the study programme's study content provided and the flexible organization of the study process.
7. Teaching staff are highly motivated professionals from the field providing the study content, ensuring the student-centered approach.

Weaknesses:

- 1) There are not enough sources in English included in the Mandatory Literature lists of the study courses focusing on the research competence development, to support students' skills to read books and articles on research skill and data analysis in foreign languages.

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. Studies take place at RTU LA training block at Liela street 14, in Liepaja, which experts visited. According to the SER (p. 192), and the site visit, experts saw in the RTU LA that the material,

technical and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. Experts were told during the site visit that the RTU LA Centre for Pedagogy and Social Work (CPSW) plays a leading role in the implementation of the study programme "Speech Therapy". As more analysis is already provided in chapter 1.3., as next specific aspects will be described in context of the study programme.

In the RTU LA, the speech therapy center was established in 2005 with the aim of providing theoretical and practical training for students. Since 2012, students have been provided with opportunities to carry out research as well. The activities there ensure the quality, sustainability, and further development of the study programme "Speech Therapy" at the professional and academic level. The transition of this center to larger premises with modern equipment for observing and analyzing classes, as well as tools for assessing speech and language development and conducting research, is also planned already (SAR, p. 194).

According to the SAR (p. 192), students are provided with an E-learning environment (Moodle), which gives access to learning materials, assignments, and information at home.

Experts visited the library during the site visit. Thanks to the merging with RTU, 15 databases are available now, before this number was only 4. The students use databases actively for free, and they can do it at home, too. In the RTU LA the library is open at 8.00 -19.00; there are about 65000 paper-books, 75% of them are on open shelves: 93 % of books, 7 % of serial editions and other items of the collection. The library's collection thematically corresponds to the study programme "Speech Therapy". For the needs of the study field, databases offer information resources on various topics of the courses to be taught, for example, the EBSCO e-book collection contains approximately 17,500 electronic publications according to the following keywords: educational psychology, research in education, special and inclusive education, languages, communication, speech therapy, anatomy, physiology and pathology, child development, Montessori pedagogy, etc. "Cambridge Journals Online" is an electronic journal on the following topics: education (6 journals), medicine (38 journals), psychology (18 journals). The library provides training, reference, and consultation on the use of information resources and the use of services. Also, final thesis can be found on open shelves from earlier years: now they are kept electronically only (SAR, p. 193). The library of RTU LA has enough resources for the new books: about 15000 EUR per year.

According to the SAR (p. 197), The Center for Alternative Education was established in RTU LA in September 2007: it has been one of the areas of activity of the Speech Therapy Centre, which also offers a full range of Montessori didactic materials for preschool learners, partly for primary school learners. Experts visited the Montessori-class during the site visit in the RTU LA. Music therapy tools are available in the specific room: there are opportunities to practically master their use under the guidance of an experienced specialist. The Speech and Voice Research Laboratory is available for both faculty and students during the study process and for conducting research. The resources of the website are available to any interested person in the field of speech therapy. Experts have seen during the site visit that the study, informative, material, financial and technical provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process. Experts saw that the material and technical provision provided for the implementation of the study programme "Speech Therapy" is diverse - starting from practical correction materials and concluding with EEG equipment, assessment methods and materials used in Latvia are available, there is sufficient provision of IT and Library resources.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3. According to the SAR (pp. 198-199), the calculations of the planned costs of the study programme "Speech Therapy" for fulltime studies for year 2025/26 are EUR 1867.60 per place of study. To be exact, the calculation of the study programme consists of different elements:

- The study fee for full-time studies is EUR 2630.
- The study fee for part-time studies is EUR 2 310.
- The minimum number of students per course in full-time version is 15; and in part-time studies – 7. (SAR, pp. 198-199).
- The coefficient of the thematic field is 1.4; the cost coefficient in first-cycle professional higher education study programmes is 1.0.
- The cost of one study place in 2025 is EUR 2 614.64.
- The number of study places financed from the State budget is 20.
- The calculations of the study programme "Speech Therapy", part-time is EUR 1867.60 per place of study; and the coefficient is 1.05.
- The cost coefficient in the first level professional higher education study programmes is 1.0. The cost of one place of study in 2025 is EUR 1 960.98.

According to the SAR (p. 198), the costs of the study programme "Speech Therapy" are 29% of the total costs of the center's basic budget. The study programme "Speech Therapy" expenses are included in the section of the Pedagogy and Social Work Center. The analysis of the cost shows that the largest expense item is made up of remuneration (67.73%) and employer social tax, etc. costs (15.97%). The second set of expense items is made up of mutual internal expenses (7.89%), utility payments (2.56%), services (3.22%), goods (1.07%), co-financing (1.07%), fixed assets (0.48%). Experts were told during the site visit that the funding is granted for the support of the scientific activity of the academic staff. The priorities are high-level publications. The development budget of the Centre is also used for business trips to scientific conferences, their participation fees, and support for students' research.

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

Experts saw during the site visit, that the study, informative, material, financial and technical provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process. The financing from the State budget funds is sufficient to prepare a certain number of specialists each year. The RTU LA developed professional centers to focus on specific educational fields in the context of speech therapy.

Strengths:

1. The RTU LA is a center of speech therapy in the country;
2. There is a Montessori class in the RTU LA, which is well developed and important for the students in this study programme, as Montessori is an important classic in the world in the context of this study field.
3. The transition of the Speech Therapy Center to larger premises with modern equipment for observing and analyzing classes, as well as tools for assessing speech and language development, conducting research is planned.
4. The Speech and Voice Research Laboratory is available for both faculty and students during the study process, and for conducting research.

Weaknesses: Not identified.

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 RTU LA developed professional centers to focus on specific educational fields in the context of speech therapy. The RTU LA Centre for Pedagogy and Social Work (CPSW) plays a leading role in the implementation of the study programme "Speech Therapy". The financing from the State budget funds is sufficient to prepare a certain number of specialists each year. Experts found that the study, informative, material, financial and technical provisions comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, creating prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The "Speech Therapy" study programme is implemented by a highly competent and experienced academic team, combining expertise in pedagogy, psychology, linguistics, and medical rehabilitation. According to SAR chapter 3.4.1 and Annex "List of academic staff_RTU_LA_RTU_LA", the study programme involves 36 lecturers, the majority of the academic staff hold Doctor's degrees, others hold Master's degrees, one medical specialist certified as a speech and language therapist.

The average pedagogical experience is more than 20 years, having over 15 years of experience in higher education or preschool institutions, and approximately 30% combining teaching with clinical practice in hospitals, rehabilitation or speech development centres. Around one in four lecturers continues to work directly with children in speech development programmes, ensuring immediate transfer of practical experience into teaching.

The academic staff's qualifications fully comply with national legislation (Law on Higher Education Institutions) and RTU internal regulations. The teaching team includes professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and lecturers with diverse but complementary academic backgrounds in linguistics, phonetics, pedagogy, and psychology.

Evidence shows that staff are well prepared to teach in both theoretical and practice-oriented settings. Courses such as Speech Development and Disorders, Phonetic and Phonological Disorders, and Language Acquisition in Multilingual Contexts are delivered by staff with research expertise and professional certification. Teachers regularly integrate modern diagnostic and correction methods, ICT-supported speech analysis tools, and inclusive education practices.

During the on-site visit, students emphasized that the lecturers' clinical background and ability to link classroom theory to real-world examples were decisive for understanding complex developmental disorders. Employers confirmed during the on-site visit that graduates demonstrate strong applied competences and diagnostic precision, which reflects the practical experience of their lecturers.

Moreover, several staff members hold leadership positions in national professional bodies, such as the Latvian Association of Speech and Language Therapists, the Association of Special Educators, and local municipal boards on inclusive education. Their participation ensures that the study programme is continuously aligned with professional standards and evolving labour market demands.

The institution has a defined procedure for recruiting and evaluating academic staff, including periodic qualification reviews, performance evaluations, and foreign language proficiency assessments (see SAR section 3.4.1. and Annex "Confirmation - knowledge of the foreign language"). RTU ensures professional diversity.

It can be concluded that the composition, qualifications, and professional experience of the teaching staff fully meet national and institutional standards and strongly support the achievement of the study programme's learning outcomes.

2.4.2. The Speech Therapy study programme demonstrates stability and sustainability of its academic staff composition. Between 2020 and 2024, four lecturers retired or completed their contracts, and four new members joined the team. All replacements were carefully selected to ensure continuity in the academic and clinical profile of the study programme (SAR section 3.4.2).

Each newly recruited academic undergoes an induction process that includes mentorship by senior professors and co-teaching of study courses. The mentoring process is documented through course evaluation reports and peer observations (SAR section 3.4.2. Annex “Statistical data on mobility and professional development”).

To ensure smooth transitions, RTU follows the Methodology for Academic Staff Election, which involves three stages:

1. Qualification verification - assessment of degrees, publications, and pedagogical record.
2. Faculty Council approval - evaluation of suitability for the specific study field.
3. Senate confirmation - compliance with institutional and national standards.

The average staff turnover rate (8%) is low compared to national benchmarks, indicating high retention and institutional stability. Staff leaving positions do so mainly due to retirement or full-time project involvement, not dissatisfaction. Importantly, in all cases of staff change, the replacement lecturers met the same qualification standards and typically added new competences - e.g., two new lecturers with clinical background introduced digital speech analysis tools, broadening methodological diversity. New staff members are also encouraged to participate in Erasmus+ mobility and professional exchange, with three lecturers participating in short-term teaching visits in 2023-2024 (SAR section 3.4.2. and Annex “Statistical data on outgoing and incoming mobility of academic staff”).

The university also maintains cooperation agreements with regional institutions - schools, rehabilitation centres, and preschools - ensuring continuous access to practitioners for guest lectures and mentoring. This partnership network helps mitigate risks related to temporary staff shortages and enriches the programme with external expertise.

Overall, the institutional mechanisms guarantee that staff changes are managed transparently and without negative influence on the study quality or study programme continuity.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. According to SAR Annexes “Academic staff CVs of RTU LA and RTU RA” and “Scientific publications of academic staff”, all lecturers meet the regulatory publication and experience criteria. The majority of staff have peer-reviewed publications or equivalent professional experience exceeding five years, 82% have two or more scientific publications and 30% have international Scopus or Web of Science-indexed papers. Five lecturers serve on editorial boards or act as peer reviewers.

Among recent works:

1. Cognitive and Phonetic Development in Bilingual Children (Frontiers in Psychology, 2023).
2. Digital Tools for Early Speech Correction (Sustainability, 2022);
3. Inclusive Pedagogical Practices in Preschool Education (Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, 2021);
4. Several lecturers are co-authors of national-level teaching materials, including Speech Sound Development Atlas (2020), now used by multiple educational institutions across Latvia.

Professional experience is also substantial: The majority of the teaching staff have at least 10 years of practical experience as speech therapists or special educators. This professional foundation ensures the direct transfer of field knowledge into the study process.

The combination of active publishing and ongoing professional engagement makes the study

programme exceptionally practice-oriented while maintaining academic rigour.

2.4.5. Collaboration between academic staff is deeply institutionalised within RTU's structure. The Speech Therapy study programme operates in RTU LA, with continuous coordination and communication with RTU RA. During the on-site academic staff of RTU RA and RTU LA have repeatedly emphasized that one of the most constructive forms of collaboration for improving and developing the curriculum is their mutual consultations on curriculum-related topics.

Key cooperation mechanisms include:

1. Biannual joint curriculum planning meetings - review of course descriptions, assessment alignment, and update of literature lists.
2. Monthly MS Teams coordination sessions - exchange of teaching strategies, case studies, and project progress reports.
3. Shared Moodle environment - both academies use identical digital courses to ensure parity of student experience.
4. Joint supervision of bachelor theses - inter-academy teams co-supervise final research papers.
5. Methodological seminars - e.g., "Speech Development and Disorders in a Multilingual Context" (2023), attended by 45 teachers and students.
6. Joint publications and conference participation, including contributions to the international conference Child. Teacher. Education.

New staff members are introduced to this system via peer collaboration, gradually assuming independent responsibilities after mentoring. During the on-site visit students report consistency in course structure and quality across both campuses, confirming the effectiveness of this model.

Cooperation also extends beyond academia - employers from rehabilitation centres in Kurzeme and Latgale regularly participate in teaching sessions and provide case materials for coursework. Such mechanisms ensure continuous knowledge exchange, interdisciplinary integration, and uniformity of quality standards across regional campuses.

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

The Speech Therapy study programme is implemented by an academically strong, professionally diverse, and research-active staff. The qualifications, research record, and pedagogical competence of the lecturers meet all requirements and effectively ensure the achievement of programme goals and learning outcomes. Consistent staff development mechanisms make this study programme Latvia's key centres for speech therapy education.

Strengths:

1. Highly qualified and professionally experienced staff with strong integration of research and practice.
2. Balanced mix of senior and early-career academics ensuring continuity.
3. Stable staff composition with a transparent recruitment and mentoring system.
4. Significant number of publications, including 18% in Q1-Q2 journals.

Weaknesses:

1. Not always there is sufficient amount of time available for academic staff to engage in research activities.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Speech Therapy professional study programme staff fully comply with national and institutional qualification requirements. All lecturers hold relevant degrees in pedagogy or related fields, supported by research achievements and extensive professional practice.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education". This is evidenced by SAR Annex "Annex_6_Compliance of the State Standard of Education_Speech Therapy_2025.pdf", which documents the study programme's alignment with the standard.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the professional standard "Speech Therapist" (approved on 10 June 2020). This is evidenced by SAR Annex "Annex_7_Conformity_Occupational Standart_Speech Therapy_2025.pdf", which demonstrates the study programme's alignment with the requirements of the standard.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme's course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and comply with the requirements outlined in the Law on Higher Education Institutions. This is evidenced by the course descriptions provided in SAR Annex "ANNEX_Study course plans_Speech Therapy_2025.docx".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme issues diplomas in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 202 "procedure for Issuing State-Recognised Higher Education Qualification Documents". This is evidenced by the diploma sample provided in SAR Annex "Diploma_diploma_pielikuma_paraugi_Logopedija_LV_ENG.pdf".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme meets the state-language proficiency requirements set by Cabinet Regulation No. 733 "Regulations on the Scope of State Language Proficiency, the Procedure for the State Language Proficiency Examination, and the State Fee for the Language Proficiency Examination". This is evidenced by the attached teaching-staff resumes (SAR Annex "Confirmation - knowledge of the foreign language.edoc") and the confirmation of state-language proficiency (SAR Annex "Confirmation - knowledge of the state language.edoc").

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme uses study agreements that comply with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Mandatory Provisions to Be Included in the Study Agreement". This is evidenced by the sample study agreement provided in SAR Annex "Sample of study agreement.zip".

- 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

The study programme provides students with the possibility to continue their studies at another

higher education institution if needed. This is evidenced by the cooperation agreement with University of Latvia in the programme “Special Education Teacher or Speech Therapist Teacher” (this study programme at the LU is licensed only on 27th August 2025, therefore, the attached agreement does not include a mutual agreement in the context of this study programme).

- 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

The study programme ensures that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the programme is not accredited or if the licence is revoked due to actions or inaction by the institution and the student chooses not to continue studies in another programme. This is evidenced by RTU's confirmation provided in SAR Annex “Confirmation - on compensation for losses.edoc”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The attached annex (SAR Annex “Annex_Compliance of Cabinet Regulation No. 569_Speech therapy_2025.docx”) confirms that the study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers’ regulations.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme fully complies with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

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

The qualifications, research record, and pedagogical competence of the lecturers meet all requirements and effectively ensure the achievement of study programme goals and learning outcomes. Consistent staff development mechanisms make this study programme Latvia’s key centre for speech therapy education.

The first cycle (professional bachelor’s) study programme “Speech Therapy” is a unique case in the higher education study programme area in the field of Education and Pedagogy and it is highly valued by graduates and employers. There is a clear and purposeful interconnection detected between study courses, internship and research activities that ensures the quality of the qualification provided. Flexibility, interconnection between study content and work environment, provision of feedback and self-reflection, CLIL approach and other effective methodological and organisational principles ensures the study environment which helps to ensure the achievement of

goals set for the programme. Employers highly value the graduates and students already entering the job market for their competence and support provided by RTU LA, but the study programme is implemented only in RTU LA which limits the possibilities to provide job market with qualified specialists all around Latvia.

The RTU LA developed professional centers to focus on specific educational fields in the context of speech therapy. The RTU LA Centre for Pedagogy and Social Work (CPSW) plays a leading role in the implementation of the study programme "Speech Therapy". The financing from the State budget funds is sufficient to prepare a certain number of specialists each year. Experts found that the study, informative, material, financial and technical provisions comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, creating prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Evaluation of the study programme "Speech Therapy"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Speech Therapy"

Short-term recommendations

1. Balance the number of sources in English /Latvian included in the Mandatory Literature lists of the study courses focusing on the research competence development, to support students' skills to read books and articles on research skill and data analysis in foreign languages. This is the action to perform annually but not later than before the new study year 2026./2027.

2. To renew the agreement with the LU regarding the continuation of education, as the LU's new study programme "Special Education Teacher or Speech Therapist Teacher" was licensed only on 27th August 2025.

Long-term recommendations

1. Consider the opportunities to ensure the implementation of the study programme also in RTU RA to widen future opportunities of the study programme sustainability and to provide a job market with qualified specialists all around Latvia.

2. To enhance the integration of telepractice, digital health tools, and innovative pedagogical technologies into study courses to strengthen the field's alignment with modern educational and professional practices.

3. To establish a systematic approach to graduate career tracking and quantitative analysis of study programme impact to support evidence-based development and quality assurance.

4. To increase internationalisation by expanding the number of English-taught modules or fostering cooperation with international academic and professional partners.

II - "Teacher" ASSESSMENT

II - "Teacher" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The first-cycle Professional Bachelor's Study Programme "Teacher" demonstrates clear compliance with the study field "Education and pedagogy".

The study programme adheres to national legislative acts, including the "Education Law" and the "Law on Higher Education Institutions". The study programme is aligned with RTU's strategic priorities for 2023–2027, particularly in ensuring study quality and international competitiveness of the study programme, and the responsiveness to the labour market trends in the field of education (SAR, p. 316). The goals of the first-cycle Professional Bachelor's Study Programme (PBSP) Teacher are fully aligned with the overarching aims of the study field Education and Pedagogy. Both emphasize the preparation of professionally competent, socially responsible and internationally competitive teachers who are able to respond to contemporary educational challenges and labour-market needs. The study programme's objectives (specifically, developing students' professional competence, integrating educational sciences with subject-specific content, strengthening applied research skills, and fostering continuous personal and professional growth) reflect the study field's priorities of improving study quality, ensuring adaptability to changes in the educational environment, and promoting internationalization. The study programme's learning outcomes, formulated in terms of knowledge, skills, and competences, correspond to the teacher profession standard and ensure the acquisition of core pedagogical competencies, inclusion and diversity awareness, practice-based learning, and the ability to engage in reflective and research-informed practice. Thus, the study programme's aims and expected results are coherently interrelated with the goals, structure, and development priorities of the study field, ensuring its full compliance with national regulatory frameworks and sectoral expectations.

The study programme integrates theory and practice and covers fundamental pedagogical principles and methodologies consistent with the aims of teacher education in Latvia. The study plan includes educational theories, learning psychology, class management, inclusive education, and professional ethics (SAR, p. 317). These components reflect the core requirements of the teacher profession standard.

The link between theory and practice is also demonstrated through the combination of internships and reflective learning, to ensure that students get acquainted and apply professional competencies within authentic educational environments. The emphasis on inclusion, diversity, and lifelong learning further strengthens the programme's conformity with nowadays educational priorities and European teacher education standards.

2.1.2. The title, structure, and parameters of the first cycle (professional bachelor) study programme "Teacher" are coherent and in line with professional qualification requirements in teacher education. The title "Teacher" covers and reflects the purpose and outcome of the study programme. The assigned code 42141 denotes a Level 6 professional higher education study programme in the field of teacher education (SAR, p. 318). Graduates of the study programme obtain a Professional Bachelor's degree in Teacher Education and the professional qualification Teacher, that is consistent with the current national professional standards. The interrelations are clear because they form a coherent framework that defines the study programme's purpose, structure, and expected results in accordance with national regulatory standards and sectoral needs. The study programme title and code reflect its positioning within the classification of higher education and clearly indicate the thematic field of teacher education, while the awarded degree and professional qualification ensure compliance with the requirements of the teacher profession standard. The aims and objectives derive from this regulatory and professional context, setting the direction for preparing graduates with the competencies needed for effective pedagogical practice. These aims are operationalised through learning outcomes that specify the knowledge, skills, and competences students must acquire, ensuring that the study programme's content and assessment align with the expected

professional profile. Admission requirements, in turn, ensure that applicants possess the necessary prior knowledge and abilities to successfully achieve the defined outcomes. As a result, all elements function as an integrated system that guarantees consistency, transparency, and quality in preparing future teachers.

The aim of the study programme is to develop competencies that allow the graduates to work in educational institutions at different levels. The objectives of the study programme focus on pedagogical competence, the integration of theory and practice, applied research and personal development. The learning outcomes contain knowledge, skills and attitudes and lead to competences in line with the teacher profession standard.

The admission requirements include secondary education (CE in Latvian, mathematics, foreign language or STIP in a foreign language, average annual mark not lower than 7 points for compulsory subjects) and an oral and written entrance examination (SAR, p. 318). The study programme includes 240 ECTS, over 4 years full time study or 4 years and 5 months (part-time extramural studies).

The study programme is organized in Latvian, both Liepaja and Rezekne, which fosters accessibility and meets regional balance. The structure is modular to foster flexibility and optimal responsiveness to student demands.

2.1.3. The first-cycle professional bachelor's study programme "Teacher" underwent several corrections. Overall, these corrections were meant to ensure the compliance with the national legislation, to improve the students' professional competences and the relevance of the programme and to optimize the resource use of the programme.

These key corrections include amongst others (SAR, pp. 313-314):

1. Simplification of admission requirements: The study programme now requires secondary education and successful completion of the entrance examination, aligning with expert recommendations;
2. Adjustment of ECTS credits, due to the transition to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS);
3. Changes in the teaching staff to strengthen the quality of the study programme;
4. Addition of new modules: "Teacher of Social Studies and History" with future plans for "Sports and Health Teacher" and "Spanish Language Teacher" at the RTU LA;
5. The part-time study sessions are coordinated, and courses are aligned with other study programmes (e.g., "European Language and Cultural Studies") to foster efficient use of resources and maximize student group sizes;
6. Refinement of objectives, tasks, and learning outcomes to emphasize professional competence, local and international competitiveness, and pedagogical effectiveness.

These corrections are well justified in the SAR (pp. 314-316), based on legal requirements, labor market needs, international credit standards, and expert recommendations from previous assessments.

2.1.4. The study programme is clearly justified economically and socially by referring to several national strategic documents, including: the Guidelines for the Development of Education (2021-2027), the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030, and the National Development Plan of Latvia (2021-2027) (SAR, p. 319). This indicates a strong alignment with national educational and workforce priorities.

The study programme responds to societal needs (SAR, p. 320). Surveys indicate substantial shortages in key subjects (Latvian language, mathematics, STEM, foreign languages, sports). Next to this, high teacher attrition rates are documented, with 33% leaving within the first five years. Also, the age distribution shows that half of the teaching workforce is over 50, and only 9% under 30. The study programme also aligns with Skola 2030.

Graduates are immediately employable. Many students are already working in schools during their studies. This is positive to gain practical experience and can foster the transition to the workforce. Through the introduction of modules of languages and sports and health education the study programme meets societal needs and legislative changes (e.g., the introduction of a second European language). The current study programme's structure allows specialization in multiple subjects, increasing employability in areas with high demand.

Student numbers are provided for full-time and part-time students across RTU LA and RTU RA (SAR, pp. 321-323). The total student numbers are reported with breakdown by year of study, form of study (full-time or part-time), and funding source (budget vs private). Some of the historical drop-out reasons (family, financial, COVID-19) are addressed. The 2024/2025 figures show 53 full-time and 106 part-time students. The expert group notices that trends indicate stability with gradual growth. This is also shown in the statistics that can be found in the SAR (p. 323).

The students of the study programme participate in Erasmus+ and other (international) projects which increases the economic and social relevance of the study programme.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The professional bachelor study programme "Teacher" shows strong compliance with the study field "Education and Pedagogy". Its structure, objectives, and content are coherent and responsive to educational reforms, labour market needs, and pedagogical innovation. The connection between its title, code, aims, learning outcomes, degree and qualification confirms a well-designed and justified programme structure. Continued improvement could focus on explicitly mapping outcomes to EQF descriptors and providing quantitative data supporting the effectiveness of these interrelations. Further enhancement could be achieved by incorporating regular benchmarking and outcome-based monitoring.

Each change is clearly linked to improving the study programme quality, aligning with the study field, meeting legal requirements, and addressing societal and labor market needs. The SAR refers to documentation and decisions (e.g., Senate decisions, expert recommendations, legal references) to confirm these corrections. Thus, the corrections are analyzed, justified, and demonstrably support the programme's objectives and quality standards.

The study programme is justified economically and socially. It demonstrates stable student dynamics, and it provides clear pathways to employment. The study programme aligns with Latvia's national priorities and addresses pressing teacher shortages. Enhancement could be achieved by including additional longitudinal data on graduates' career outcomes and formal economic impact assessment measurement.

Strengths:

1. The study programme content and structure fully correspond to the thematic area of Education and Pedagogy and adhere to national and institutional strategies.
2. The study programme prepares graduates to address diverse learner needs and promote equitable learning environments.
3. The study programme demonstrates an exemplary alignment among all parameters (title, code, aims, learning outcomes, degree and qualification) ensuring not only coherence but also a clear enhancement of professional relevance and graduate preparedness that go beyond the standard expectations.
4. Simplified and transparent entry requirements promote inclusivity without compromising standards.
5. The study programme offers full-time and part-time options, as well as modular structures.

6. There is a strong alignment with national labor market needs and policy frameworks.
7. The graduates are employable even before completing the study programme, which demonstrates the practical relevance of the study programme.

Weaknesses:

1. The alignment is evident, but measurable indicators (e.g., graduate performance in teaching or employer satisfaction) are not systematically reported.
2. Although Latvian is presumed, explicit mention and rationale for language choice could strengthen clarity for external reviewers.
3. There is hardly direct evidence about the impact of the corrections on student outcomes or teaching quality.
4. Employment outcomes are mainly descriptive; quantitative longitudinal data on graduate employment rates and career progression are limited.
5. Economic justification is inferred from teacher shortages but lacks detailed cost-benefit analysis or projections.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The first cycle (professional Bachelor) Study Programme “Teacher” is clearly aligned with contemporary educational needs and its stated objectives. RTU LA offers the first cycle (Professional Bachelor) Study Programme “Teacher” across a broad range of subject areas, including Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Technology, and multiple Language specialisations, ensuring coverage of key school disciplines during the reporting period. In contrast, RTU RA currently focuses on Languages (Latvian language and literature) and Mathematics, while also demonstrating relevant capacity and experience by previously offering studies in Technology, Social and Civic Education, and additional language specialisations during the reporting period (SAR p. 324). All offered specialization modules are:

1. social studies and history (research in the social sciences, ethics, culture, economics, law, history and historiography, etc.);
2. language and literature (linguistics and literary science, literary learning and history, speech and language, Latvian literature and language (phonetics, lexicology, morphology, syntax, learning), English literature and language (grammar, communication, learning), Spanish literature and language (grammar, communication, learning), German literature and language (grammar, communication, learning), translation and interpretation of texts, etc.);
3. natural sciences (biology, zoology, etc.), mathematics, physics, geography;
4. information technologies (robotics, web technologies, computer networks, programming, etc.);
5. design and technology (design, materials and their processing, art, etc.);
6. sport and health (biomechanics and ergonomics, human anatomy, physiology and psychology, kinesiology, medicine and health, sport and physical fitness, etc. (SAR pp. 343).

During the reporting period, RTU LA implemented the first-cycle PBSP “Teacher” in four curriculum areas: Natural Sciences (Biology, Physics, Natural Sciences—Natural Sciences, Physics or Geography), Mathematics, Technology (Design and Technology, Computing), and Languages (Latvian language and literature, English, and German). RTU RA currently delivers studies in two fields—Languages (Latvian language and literature) and Mathematics—while during the reporting period it also offered programmes in Technology, Social and Civic Education, and Languages (English and German, see SAR p. 324).

The curriculum is designed to develop both general and professional teacher competencies in accordance with the national professional standard, ensuring regulatory compliance. Study modules

are interconnected and combine subject areas with their teaching methodologies, reflecting an integrated approach rather than treating subjects separately, for example, students are assessed according to established criteria that cover their attitude toward practice, pedagogical skills, cooperation and organisational abilities, as well as their capacity to analyse and evaluate their own work and required documentation (SAR p. 335). This design supports graduates in teaching their chosen subjects at different proficiency levels in line with current national education standards. The study programme's goals and learning outcomes are coherent and focused on preparing qualified teachers who meet labour market needs. For example, pedagogical practice is organised through agreements with the education authorities of the Kurzeme and Latgale regions, ensuring cooperation with schools at different levels. The RTU centres responsible for teacher education regularly meet with school leaders and mentors to coordinate practice arrangements. During internships, university staff collaborate with mentors, visit students in schools, and observe their teaching (SAR p. 336). The curriculum promotes evidence-based practice and innovation, including student involvement in applied research to support ongoing professional development (for example, projects in which students and stakeholders — such as schools — participated). Learning outcomes cover knowledge, skills, and competences essential for educators — such as subject mastery, planning and assessment, and key transversal competences required by competence-based education reforms.

Shortly, the study programme plan of the first-cycle professional higher education programme “Teacher” complies with the state education standard and the professional standard for the teaching profession. As described in the Self-Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 41–42), the programme was developed within nationally coordinated SAM 8.2.1 projects led by the University of Latvia and Daugavpils University, involving academic staff, external experts, and education stakeholders, which ensured alignment with national regulatory frameworks. The structure of the programme, its learning outcomes, and content are explicitly designed to achieve the required knowledge, skills, and competences defined in the professional standard (SAR, p. 211). Therefore, the study programme plan demonstrably meets the higher education study programme “Teacher” requirement regarding compliance with the state education standard and the professional standard. Overall, the study programme content is relevant, up-to-date, and coherent, supporting achievement of the intended learning outcomes. It addresses current educational and societal needs by preparing versatile secondary-level teachers able to teach multiple subjects and fully complies with national qualification requirements.

2.2.2. Not Applicable.

2.2.3. The implementation methods of the study programme support the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and demonstrate a strong commitment to student-centred learning, for example, the study programme is aligned with the mandatory content of each module at the relevant educational levels and is regularly updated to reflect current developments in the education sector and labour-market needs. Updates are informed by (1) discussions with students and survey results, (2) integration of sector-relevant documents and guidelines, (3) employer involvement in course development and teaching, and (4) evaluation of pedagogical practice outcomes (see, SAR p. 328). On the other hand, although student-centred methods are used, the documentation places greater emphasis on curriculum structure than on pedagogy. Active learning strategies are not described explicitly enough in the programme materials, and the integration of digital tools and inclusive education practices is inconsistent, reducing transparency and not fully meeting modern teaching expectations. The study programme structure itself is flexible, allowing students to select combinations of specialisations (e.g., language and social sciences, or mathematics and physics), which enables them to tailor their studies to personal interests and school needs. This flexibility reflects contemporary learner-centred principles and promotes student

agency.

The study programme utilises diverse pedagogical approaches consistent with modern teacher-education practices. Teaching methods are interactive and practice-oriented, encouraging students to actively engage with educational theory and its application in real teaching contexts. Integrated coursework combines subject knowledge with didactics, suggesting that methods such as group projects, and peer discussions are used to foster practical teaching skills.

Students are supported in developing the ability to connect educational science with subject content through hands-on tasks such as designing lesson plans and educational projects, accompanied by reflective feedback processes. The study programme encourages ongoing professional development and reflective practice, aligning with international expectations. Admission and assessment procedures value students' motivation, communication skills, and understanding of education, further reinforcing a student-centred philosophy. The study programme's international accessibility is limited because it is delivered primarily in Latvian, which restricts opportunities for international students.

Overall, the study programme effectively models learner-centred pedagogy and uses methods that align with its aims, outcomes, and modern educational standards. In sum, students are provided with meaningful opportunities to practise teaching, reflect on their learning, and develop the autonomy required of competent and adaptive educators.

2.2.4. Practical teaching experience is a cornerstone of this teacher education study programme, and the internship system effectively supports achievement of the intended learning outcomes (see, SAR pp. 229-231). As a first cycle (professional bachelor's) study programme, it includes extensive school placements to bridge theory and practice and meets national requirements for initial teacher training. Students complete multiple internship periods, gradually taking on more teaching responsibilities as they progress. Namely, the internship is carried out in accordance with a formal agreement that defines its objectives, tasks, evaluation procedures, and the duties and responsibilities of all parties involved. Students work toward the internship's goals by applying the knowledge, skills, abilities, and prior experience they have acquired (SAR p. 230). These placements occur after students have gained foundational pedagogical and subject-didactic knowledge, ensuring meaningful application in real classrooms. Internship tasks are directly aligned with study programme outcomes: student teachers plan and deliver lessons, apply appropriate teaching methods, manage classrooms, and assess pupil learning. By the final year, students are expected to independently conduct classes in their chosen subjects, demonstrating ability to plan learning processes and evaluate student progress.

The RTU (both RTU LA and RTU RA) has partnerships with a wide network of schools, ensuring relevant and high-quality placements across subject specialisations. Mentors and supervisors provide ongoing feedback and assessment, supporting students' professional growth. Internship schedules are coordinated with school needs, and students often complete reflective assignments or research activities alongside teaching.

The structure ensures compliance with legal and professional standards, including experience at both lower and upper secondary levels and completion of the required teaching hours. In summary, the internship component is well-developed, well-supervised, and essential to competency acquisition.

2.2.5. Not Applicable.

2.2.6. The final thesis topics in the first cycle (Professional Bachelor) Study Programme "Teacher" are closely aligned with contemporary educational needs and professional competencies (see SAR pp. 337-340). For example, students present their undergraduate thesis research at the international scientific-practical conference "Children. Teacher. Education," organised in cooperation

with the University of Latvia and Daugavpils University (SAR p. 337). The thesis enables students to investigate a pedagogical or subject-didactic issue, often arising from their school practice or current challenges in their discipline. During the site visit, students highlighted that throughout their studies they are encouraged to engage in applied research and innovative problem-solving, providing a strong foundation for analysing real classroom situations and educational issues in their thesis work. Typical topics may include evaluating new teaching methods, integrating digital tools in subject learning, or improving student engagement - directly reflecting school needs and the student's specialisation. These topics correspond to the study programme's focus areas and demonstrate students' mastery of subject methodology and educational science. The approach also reflects labour market and societal trends, such as competency-based education, inclusion, and digital learning, ensuring that graduates are prepared to address evolving demands in schools. The thesis serves as evidence of research capability, requiring students to formulate questions, conduct literature reviews, and analyse pedagogical practices using scientific methods. This process strengthens their ability to use research to improve teaching and supports their development as reflective, innovative educators. Overall, the final theses clearly link theory and practice, contribute to professional growth, and meet the expectations.

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

Across the analysed criteria, the first-cycle professional higher education study programme "Teacher" demonstrates strong overall quality and coherence. The programme content is relevant, up to date, and well aligned with its objectives and intended learning outcomes, responding to labour market needs and current educational trends while fully complying with the state education standard and the professional standard (Criterion 2.2.1). The study implementation methods generally support the achievement of learning outcomes and reflect student-centred, practice-oriented approaches that enable the development of professional teaching competences and flexibility in responding to school needs (Criterion 2.2.3). The internship system is well organised and effectively integrates theory and practice, ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements and supporting the acquisition of essential professional competences (Criterion 2.2.4). Final thesis topics are relevant to the field of education, closely linked to students' specialisations and school practice, and contribute to the development of research skills and reflective professional practice (Criterion 2.2.6). Criteria 2.2.2 and 2.2.5 are not applicable, as the programme is neither a master's nor a doctoral study programme. The first cycle (Professional Bachelor) study programme "Teacher" demonstrates a comprehensive and modern design that excels in several key areas, while a few challenges are noted for continuous improvement (see, below).

Strengths:

1. Alignment with Standards and Needs: The study programme is closely aligned with national education standards and the professional teacher standard, ensuring graduates meet all regulatory requirements. Its curriculum reflects current educational reforms, such as competence-based learning and contemporary curriculum structures, and responds to labour-market needs, including the demand of teachers.
2. A coherent and well-integrated curriculum, effectively supported by a thoughtfully structured internship.
3. Strong Practical Training (also indicated in the site visit interviews): Extensive internships form a major strength of the study programme, providing substantial hands-on experience in schools.
4. Student-Centred and Flexible Learning: The study programme supports student agency through flexible specialisation choices and encouragement of self-directed professional development. Teaching approaches are learner-centred and interactive, modeling the practices expected of future teachers.

Weaknesses:

1. Visibility of Student-Centred Methods: Although student-centred approaches are likely used, available documentation emphasises curriculum structure more than pedagogy. Active learning strategies are not made sufficiently explicit in study programme descriptions, and the integration of digital tools and inclusive education practices is not consistently taking place, which reduces transparency and falls short of modern teaching expectations.

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. Studies take place at RTU RA training block at Atbrīvošanas street 115, in Rezekne; and RTU LA training block at Liela street 14, in Liepāja. Experts visited both buildings, and saw that the material, technical and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. After structural reform, both RTU LA and RTU RA can use each other's resources and the RTU's. As more analysis is already provided in chapter 1.3., as next only some specific aspects will be analyzed.

According to the SAR (pp. 341-342), to acquire practical skills, e.g. design, sewing, nutrition education, visual arts, and Art Research Laboratory are available. In cooperation with the Center for Natural and Engineering Sciences, equipped rooms and workshops are available for acquiring natural science, mathematics, computer science, physics and biology modules. Both in the RTU LA and RTU RA, there are classes equipped with the computers in libraries; and special classes for joint-lectures (RTU LA+RTU RA+RTU) in the building. (SAR, p. 342). Experts were told during the site visit in RTU RA by the staff that the new IT system was one of the biggest difficulties during institutional reform. After half a year (starting the study year 2025/26), it still needs some practice to get used to it. In RTU LA this kind of difficulty is over already, as they joined the RTU earlier.

According to the SAR (p. 342), in the RTU LA for practical seminars an authentic learning environment has been created in two offices (classroom tables with castors and composite chairs for schoolchildren and a workplace for the teacher, as well as digital whiteboards ODIN). In the RTU RA the center of special education is developed – experts had the possibility during the site visit to try/test a warm-sand-facility, which was a nice experience.

Experts also visited the library in both RTU RA and RTU LA. In 2024, the databases and other digital resources available in the RTU LA library were used in 24,400 connection sessions. The RTU LA Library collection thematically corresponds to the first cycle professional bachelor's study programme "Teacher" of the study field "Education and Pedagogy". The study programme offers literature according to all topics of the courses to be taught in this study programme; and of all resources, about 35% of the items in the collection are meant for this study programme. Everyone has the opportunity to use the open access databases created by the RTU LA Library: for example, the EBSCO e-book collection contains approximately 39,000 electronic publications according to educational keywords (SAR, p. 343). In the RTU LA, the library is open from 8.00 -19.00; there are about 65000 paper-books, 75% of them are on open shelves. Every day about 70 students visit the library, which is a good result, as in the RTU LA there are about 1200 students. They have enough resources for the new books: about 15000 EUR per year. Also, final thesis can be found on open

shelves from earlier years: now they are kept electronically only. In Rezekne the library is open from 9.00 -17.00, but if needed, the times can be flexible. They can spend about 18000 EUR per year on literature, which they consider to be enough (for a field of education about 6000.- EUR is available, but it is hard to fix it exactly, as many books can be used in different study programmes).

The academies are united with RTU, which means that the libraries are united, too: now 15 databases are available, before this number was only 4. Libraries welcome structural reform warmly. Also, students are happy: both in the RTU LA and RTU RA they use databases actively for free, and they can do it at home, too.

But, according to the experts' view, in the libraries (both in RTU LA and RTU RA), the newest study books cannot be found on the open shelves: only some older editions for some subjects are available. Experts were told that academies use mostly e-books. Students didn't complain - they said that during the school practice the necessary literature is available, which is even better, because in different schools' different study books are used.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3. The financial resources and provision of RTU LA and RTU RA are fully sufficient for high-quality, growth-oriented implementation of the study programme.

The cost of one study place in 2025 is EUR 2 614.64. Total funding for the academic year 2024/2025 for the field of study is EUR 1293 634 (9% of the costs are made up of the study programme "Teacher" full-time and 11% of part-time studies) (SAR, p. 347). The funding of the study base of the State budget is used: staff remuneration 78%; student scholarships 8%; improvement of infrastructure 14% (SAR, p. 344). The number of study places financed from the State budget is 20.

In addition to the funding provided by the state for student scholarships, students up to 25 years of age, or who come from large families with children, or who are orphans or left without parental dependency, or are disabled in group I or II, can apply for a social scholarship in the amount of 180.00 per month (SAR, p. 345). Experts met a student who got this scholarship and was pleased with this opportunity; student also said that it is easy to apply.

According to the SAR Table 3.3.3.1., the RTU costs per student from the State budget funding are lower than in Latvia and OECD countries. The LV average in 2021 is 12'950, OECD average 2021 - 12'703.

The funding of the science base and the funding of scientific activity at RTU RA is not divided by study fields, but is directed to the provision of scientific activity of the RTU RA. The number of students in the programme has increased to 28 study places financed by the State budget. The minimum number of students to start their studies is 9 (in part-time) and 7 (in full-time). The average number of students in one group is 10 part-time, and 16 full-time studies (SAR, p. 346). As on 01.03.2025, there were 122 students in this study programme, it covers 20% of the expenses from the study field "Education and Pedagogy".

Both in the RTU RA and RTU LA, the financing of the study base ensures access to education and is aimed at the development of the study programme, as it ensures stable and regular financing, which allows to plan and implement the study programme, covers the basic needs of the development of the study programme, especially the remuneration of employees, updating of the study literature, inventory costs.

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

The facilities, provision provided for the implementation of the study programme and its availability to students and teaching staff, is appropriate and guarantees the fluent study process. The resources of RTU LA and RTU RA are fully sufficient for high-quality, growth-oriented implementation of the study programme. The cost structure is evaluated as optimal, and appropriate to the

development strategy.

Strengths:

1. There is a system of scholarships for students who need it, and it is easy to apply.
2. There are 15 databases available in the library.
3. In the RTU RA the center of special education is developed.

Weaknesses:

1. The newest study books of subjects in general education cannot be found on the open shelves in libraries.

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 resources of RTU LA and RTU RA are fully sufficient for high-quality, growth-oriented implementation of the study programme. The cost structure is evaluated as optimal, and appropriate to the development strategy. There is a system of scholarships for students who need it, and it is easy to apply. Thanks to joining the RTU, already 15 databases are available in the library. The material, technical, and financial provisions comply with specific features and conditions for the study programme.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The first cycle (professional bachelor) study programme "Teacher" (42141) is implemented by a highly qualified and academically balanced team of lecturers and professors. According to the SAR section 3.4.1. and supporting documentation in SAR "List of academic staff_ RTU LA_ RTU RA", the teaching staff consists of 46 members in RTU RA and 68 members in RTU LA, of whom 52 % hold a PhD, and 48% a Master's degree, and all meet the qualification requirements set out in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and RTU's internal regulations for higher education teaching positions. The academic staff demonstrates a high level of professional maturity, with an average of more than 20 years of pedagogical experience. The majority of lecturers have more than 15 years of teaching experience in general or vocational education institutions and approximately 20% combine academic duties with positions in the education sector as school principals, municipal education specialists, or methodologists. This dual professional background ensures that the programme remains strongly connected to the realities of Latvian schools and current pedagogical practices.

The lecturers' specialization areas are well aligned with the study programme's structure and the teacher professional standard. RTU LA primarily provides expertise in humanities, arts, speech therapy and early childhood pedagogy, while RTU RA complements this with specialization in STEM, inclusive education, and digital pedagogy. Together, they ensure that students receive balanced methodological and didactic preparation across key teaching domains.

Evidence from the on-site visit confirms that the teaching staff are not only qualified but also motivated and pedagogically innovative. Teachers actively integrate interactive methods, digital technologies, and reflective teaching into the learning process. Employers and students emphasized that the academic staff are accessible and provide continuous mentoring, particularly during teaching practice and final thesis preparation.

In line with SAR Annex “Statistical Data on Outgoing and Incoming Mobility”, between 2019 and 2024, 12 RTU LA and 9 RTU RA lecturers participated in Erasmus+ mobility activities, including teaching exchanges and international conferences. This mobility contributes to professional renewal and introduces comparative perspectives in educational methodology and assessment.

The teaching staff’s qualifications are regularly reviewed and confirmed through transparent RTU academic election procedures. It can be concluded that the academic staff’s qualification profile fully complies with national legislation and institutional requirements, and that the range of expertise across both academies enables the achievement of the study programme’s aims and learning outcomes.

2.4.2. The study programme management purposefully maintains staff continuity while introducing new professionals from the education sector. During the last evaluation period (2020–2024), changes in the academic team have been moderate and justified. According to SAR Annex “List of Changes in the Teaching Staff”, four lecturers from RTU LA and three from RTU RA concluded their work due to retirement, workload redistribution, or health reasons. Their responsibilities were successfully taken over by qualified replacements, primarily professionals with Master’s or Doctoral degrees and practical school experience.

For example, in RTU RA, the course “Content and Learning Approaches in Mathematics” was transferred to a guest lecturer - the head of a municipal preschool institution with 13 years of professional experience. In RTU LA, “Educational Management” was reassigned to a professor who also serves as a secondary school principal. These substitutions have ensured the continuation of high-quality course delivery and strengthened the connection between pedagogical theory and practice.

The institution applies a structured mentoring and integration system for new staff. Each newly appointed lecturer is paired with a senior mentor within the study programme - usually a docent or professor with extensive teaching and research experience. Mentors assist newcomers in aligning course content with RTU academic standards, using Moodle and ORTUS platforms effectively, and adapting to RTU’s workload management and quality assurance procedures. Evidence from interviews during the on-site visit confirmed that this mentoring system is functional and supportive, allowing the integration of new staff members without disruption to study quality.

The generational mix supports both continuity and innovation, ensuring knowledge transfer while sustaining pedagogical modernization.

Institutionally, the RTU Human Resources Department regularly monitors staff age dynamics and retirement forecasts, which allows timely succession planning. In both RTU LA and RTU RA, there are ongoing internal initiatives to encourage young researchers to enter the teaching profession, including through doctoral scholarships and assistant lecturer positions.

From the perspective of study programme sustainability, special attention should be paid to demographic risks in regional areas, where it is increasingly difficult to attract new academic staff. It is also important to make the study programme more flexible concerning the number of students per group, due to the high demand of teachers in fields such as mathematics and Latvian language teaching. Nevertheless, the decentralised funding and recruitment autonomy of RTU’s regional academies allow for flexible responses, such as offering combined positions in teaching and applied research projects.

It can be concluded that the mechanisms for managing staff change are transparent, justified, and effective. Staff turnover has not negatively affected study programme quality; on the contrary, it has introduced new expertise from the field and enhanced the connection between academic and professional practice.

2.4.3. Not Applicable.

Analysis:

2.4.4. According to the Law on Higher Education Institutions and RTU's internal academic staff regulations, every teaching staff member must demonstrate sustained scholarly or professional activity relevant to the courses taught. Evidence presented in the SAR Annexes "Academic Staff CVs of RTU LA and RTU RA", "Scientific Publications of Academic Staff", and SAR (pp. 324-326) confirms that this requirement is fully met for the the first cycle (professional bachelor) study programme "Teacher" (42141).

Over the last six years, members of the academic team have maintained continuous engagement in research, methodological publication, or long-term professional practice.

The staff members have published in peer-reviewed journals or edited academic volumes, members, who serve as practising school principals or senior methodologists, have at least 15 years of verified professional experience in the Latvian education system.

The following peer-reviewed journals and series reflect the range and quality of publication venues: Sustainability - articles on sustainable pedagogy, inclusion, and digital transformation; Frontiers in Psychology - research on cognitive development and teacher reflective practice; Education Sciences - studies on higher-education didactics and teacher digital competence; Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability - papers on value-based education and green competences; Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences - conference-based articles on assessment literacy; RTU Proceedings: Pedagogy and Education - national publications on methodological innovation; Education and Pedagogy Studies (University of Latvia) - research on inclusive and multicultural education; Latvian Journal of Education - practice-oriented articles on early-career teacher mentoring; Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference "Society. Integration. Education" (SIE) - indexed conference series covering multidisciplinary educational research.

Recent representative titles include: "Digital Competence of Teachers in Hybrid Learning Environments: Challenges and Opportunities" (Sustainability, 2023); "Reflective Teaching as a Tool for Professional Growth in Latvian Teacher Education" (Education and Pedagogy Studies, 2022); "Assessment Literacy and Feedback Culture in Professional Bachelor Programmes" (RTU Proceedings, 2021); "Integrating Art-Based Methods in STEM Teacher Education" (Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, 2020).

The average publication rate per lecturer during 2019-2024 is 2.3 peer-reviewed articles, comparable to European benchmarks for first-cycle professional programmes in education. Furthermore, staff members have authored or co-authored study aids, textbooks, or methodological guides used within RTU courses and in partner schools.

Academic staff also actively disseminate their work through national and international conferences - Child. Teacher. Education (Liepāja), Pedagogy for Sustainable Development (Rēzekne), and EDULEARN (Spain).

A robust linkage between research and teaching is evident. Course content in Didactics, Educational Research, and Curriculum Design directly incorporates staff research outcomes. Professional achievements-such as participation in municipal curriculum reform groups, expert roles at the National Centre for Education, and Erasmus+ project coordination-demonstrate the applied dimension of staff expertise.

Several lecturers also contributed to collective monographs that shape national pedagogical discourse, e.g.: Professional Growth and Reflective Teaching in Early Childhood Education (RTU Press, 2023); Transformative Digital Learning: Emerging Cases and Considerations (Rezekne Academy Press, 2022); Methodological Innovation in Latvian Teacher Education (Liepāja Academy Series, 2021).

These outputs confirm the staff's consistent engagement in knowledge production and dissemination at both national and international levels. Overall, the publication profile and professional experience of the teaching staff meet and, in several respects, exceed the statutory requirements. The combination of sustained research productivity, peer-reviewed visibility and long-

term professional engagement ensures a solid scholarly foundation for the first cycle (professional bachelor) study programme “Teacher”.

2.4.5. Collaboration among teaching staff is an integral component of the study programme’s success and fully aligns with the ESG 2015 definition of quality as an interactive process between staff, students, and the learning environment. The cooperation operates on two levels - intra-academy and inter-academy - and is formalized through RTU’s Quality Management and Communication Strategy (SAR, p. 326).

Within each academy, lecturers collaborate in joint course planning, assessment design, and interdisciplinary projects. For example, the course “Content and Learning Approaches in Cultural Awareness and Self-Expression in the Arts” is co-taught by multiple lecturers from both RTU LA and RTU RA, combining expertise in music, visual arts, and drama pedagogy.

Inter-academy collaboration between RTU LA and RTU RA ensures methodological coherence. Each course is coordinated by a “lead lecturer,” responsible for aligning learning outcomes, assessment standards, and teaching materials. Communication takes place primarily via Microsoft Teams and ORTUS, supported by regular joint meetings (at least three times per semester).

Joint initiatives include: co-development of unified Moodle courses and assessment rubrics, joint supervision of student theses, shared participation in Erasmus+ and national projects, organization of the annual student research conference “Child. Teacher. Education” and the methodological collection “Anthill of Ideas” (Ideju Pūznis).

According to on-site visit evidence, this cooperation model fosters a shared academic culture and facilitates the exchange of innovative practices. The presence of two campuses - in Liepāja (Kurzeme region) and Rēzekne (Latgale region) - ensures a geographically inclusive model of teacher education, which is critical for addressing teacher shortages and promoting equal access to quality education.

The strong mentoring potential and individualized supervision is available to students.

It can be concluded that cooperation between teaching staff is systematic, productive, and aligned with quality standards. It enhances the academic and professional coherence of the study programme and directly contributes to its sustainability.

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

The first cycle (professional bachelor) study programme “Teacher” (42141) is delivered by a highly qualified and research-active academic staff, whose expertise combines long-term pedagogical experience with active involvement in research, projects, and international mobility. The staff’s qualifications fully comply with national and institutional requirements. The study programme demonstrates strong regional and national significance: it contributes to addressing Latvia’s teacher shortage, particularly in STEM and Latvian language education, and supports balanced regional development through the two-campus model. Research and cooperation practices are well developed, although continued emphasis on international publications and intergenerational renewal is recommended.

Strengths:

1. High qualification level of academic staff, all compliant with national standards.
2. Systematic cooperation between RTU LA and RTU RA enhancing methodological unity.

Weaknesses:

1. Academic staff lack adequate time to conduct research activities.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff of the professional first cycle (professional bachelor) study programme "Teacher" fully comply with national and institutional qualification requirements. The high proportion of PhD holders, strong publication record, and sustained collaboration with Latvian and European universities ensure continuity, academic excellence, and research relevance.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 of 13 June 2023 "Regulations on the State Professional Higher Education Standard" (The analysis done by RTU is found in the SAR ANNEX "Compliance of the first cycle professional higher education (bachelor's) study programme "Teacher" (code 42141) with the national education standard").

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Compliance of the study programme with Teacher's professional standard (Approved at the meeting of the Tripartite cooperation sub-council for professional education and employment of 12 June 2020, Protocol No 5) is analysed in the SAR ANNEX "Compliance with the profession standard_TEACHER.pdf", e.g. To assess the information gained from teaching and assessment in order to respond to the learning needs of the student and to assess and develop own professional competence and practice, study courses like "Research in education, study work" II (6 CP) and "Information technology in education (6 CP) have been included.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

ull time studies and part time extramural studies are implemented in Latvian, and all the study course materials are prepared in Latvian (see SAR Annex "Study course description_I_Part.pdf"), also during the onsite visit the expert group had an opportunity to see examples from RTU internal system ORTUS). The structure of study course descriptions corresponds to the requirements set in Section 56(1) Paragraph two (see SAR Annex "Study course description_I_Part.pdf") and to the Section 56(2) Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (see SAR Annex "Standard Plan_study programme_TEACHER.xlsx").

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme (see SAR Annex “Diploma_diploma pielikumu paraugi_Skolotajs_LV_ENG.pdf”) complies with the requirements stated in the Law on Higher Education Institutions (e.g., (4) A State-recognised diploma shall utilise the State coat of arms, and the Cabinet shall determine the sample of such diploma.) The information included in the Diploma and the Annex appended to the diploma complies with the regulations - Cabinet regulations 202 “Kārtība Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus” (<https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256157/>) (e.g. 1st Annex - Diploma p. 1., 2., 3).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the regulations on the state language knowledge and state language proficiency test for professional and official duties (Confirmation found in SAR Annex “knowledge of the state language.edoc”).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study agreement (see SAR Annex “ASD_studiju_ligums_ENG”) complies with the mandatory requirements indicated in the Cabinet regulations no 70 “Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie

noteikumi" (<https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=152072>).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is a confirmation provided by RTU that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in the corresponding study programme "Teacher" (42141) of the University of Latvia if the implementation of the study programme is terminated (see SAR Annex "Agreement with the University of Latvia on continuing education (in Latvian).edoc").

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is a confirmation provided by the RTU 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 university and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme (see SAR Annex "Confirmation - on compensation for losses.edoc").

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of September 11, 2018 No. 569 "Regulations on education and professional qualifications necessary for pedagogues and procedures for improving the professional competence of pedagogues" (SAR ANNEX "Compliance with MK_569_Teacher.pdf") - relevant study courses in the professional bachelor's study programme "Teacher" has been included according to the necessary competences, e.g. internships.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

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

The professional bachelor study programme "Teacher" is well aligned with the study field of

Education and Pedagogy, demonstrating a coherent structure, clear objectives, and relevance to educational reforms, labour market demands, and pedagogical innovation. Its title, aims, learning outcomes, and qualifications are consistently aligned, confirming a well-designed programme. All implemented changes are clearly justified, legally compliant, and supported by official documentation, contributing to improved quality and alignment with societal needs. Economically and socially, the programme is well justified, showing stable student enrolment, clear employment prospects, and strong alignment with Latvia's national priorities and teacher workforce needs. Further improvement could be achieved through more explicit mapping to EQF descriptors and the inclusion of longitudinal data on graduate outcomes and economic impact

The first cycle (professional bachelor) study programme "Teacher" (42141) is delivered by a highly qualified and research-active academic staff, whose expertise combines long-term pedagogical experience with active involvement in research, projects, and international mobility. The study programme demonstrates strong regional and national significance, supports balanced regional development through the two-campus model.

The resources of RTU LA and RTU RA are fully sufficient for high-quality, growth-oriented implementation of the study programme. The cost structure is evaluated as optimal, and appropriate to the development strategy. There is a system of scholarships for students who need it, and it is easy to apply. Thanks to joining the RTU, already 15 databases are available in the library. The material, technical, and financial provisions comply with specific features and conditions for the study programme.

Evaluation of the study programme "Teacher"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Teacher"

Short-term recommendations

1. The newest study books of different subjects for general education must be available in the libraries, on open shelves.

Long-term recommendations

1. Strengthen the evidence base of the study programme by systematically collecting and presenting quantitative and longitudinal data on graduate performance, student learning outcomes, employment trajectories, and economic impact, in order to clearly demonstrate the effectiveness, labour market relevance, and societal value of the programme, in view of the next accreditation.

II - "Special Education" ASSESSMENT

II - "Special Education" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The first cycle (professional bachelor) higher education study programme "Special Education" (code 42141) is implemented within the study field Education and Pedagogy and, as confirmed by

the experts, shows clear compliance with the objectives, structure, and regulatory requirements of the field. This conclusion is based on the evidence provided in the SAR and annexes, which demonstrate how the programme aligns with Cabinet Regulation No. 305 and the national Teacher Professional Standard. The study programme awards the professional qualification “Teacher” (specialization: Special Education Teacher) at EQF/LQF level 6, preparing specialists capable of working with children and young people with diverse developmental, behavioural, or learning difficulties in inclusive and special education settings.

The aim of the study programme is to train competent, creative, and ethically responsible special-education teachers who are able to assess, support, and develop learners with special educational needs (SEN) in line with Latvia’s inclusive-education framework (SAR, pp. 434–436). The objectives and learning outcomes are clearly defined and correspond to the national Teacher professional standard and RTU’s strategic development goals, as evidenced to the experts by the detailed mapping of course-level outcomes to study programme outcomes and LQF/EQF level 6 descriptors, the explicit alignment of modules and specialisation content with the professional tasks defined for special-education teachers (e.g., diagnostics, inclusive pedagogy, adapted methodologies), and the documented compliance tables demonstrating how each learning outcome reflects the knowledge, skills, and competences required by the Teacher Professional Standard.

The curriculum integrates pedagogy, psychology, special-needs didactics, speech and communication development, social inclusion, and applied research. The study programme content aligns with the Education Development Guidelines 2021–2027 and National Development Plan 2021–2027, emphasising equity, accessibility, and modernisation of teacher education. The structure includes seven thematic groups and seven internships, ensuring continuous practical skill development linked to academic content (e.g., diagnostics, correction methodologies, communication, oropharyngeal function assessment).

RTU’s quality-management system, based on the EFQM model, ensures regular monitoring of compliance with study-field standards, stakeholder participation, and continuous study programme improvement (SAR, pp. 436–437).

2.1.2. The “Special Education” study programme (code 42141) awards the professional bachelor’s qualification Teacher in Special Education at EQF/LQF level 6, corresponding to the Cabinet Regulation No. 322 (SAR, pp. 438–441). The title, aims, qualification, and learning outcomes form a coherent whole, which experts recognised through the study programme’s clearly articulated competence profile, the structured progression from foundational to specialised special education needs - focused study modules, and the way the SAR demonstrates how specific course themes - such as developmental assessment, behavioural support, communication development and inclusive methodology - directly operationalise the study programme aims and respond to national needs for special-education professionals.

The study programme aim is to prepare teachers with the competences required to plan, implement, and assess educational processes for learners with various disabilities, learning disorders, and behavioural challenges. The learning outcomes are clearly expressed and categorised under knowledge, skills, and competences, ensuring alignment with EQF level 6 descriptors (SAR, pp. 440–442).

The duration and scope of the study programme — 240 credit points (four years) — comply with national regulations for professional bachelor’s degrees. The structure ensures progression from general pedagogy and psychology to special-pedagogy specialisation, practical training, and applied research (SAR, pp. 442–444).

The language of instruction is Latvian, justified by the professional context, though international pedagogical resources and exchange opportunities are available (SAR, p. 461). Admission requirements include completion of secondary education and compliance with RTU’s Senate regulations, ensuring academic readiness and motivation for pedagogical work.

Although RTU Rezekne Academy participates in Erasmus+ mobility and offers students access to international resources, internationalisation remains limited in scope. Student and staff mobility numbers are modest, and the programme does not offer courses in English, which restricts opportunities for incoming exchange students and limits the programme's visibility in the broader European higher-education area. The absence of English-taught components also reduces possibilities for joint learning activities, international classroom experiences, and broader exposure to international pedagogical practices. This limits the international dimension of the study process and the development of intercultural competences, which are increasingly relevant in contemporary teacher education.

While digital platforms are used in programme administration and learning support, the integration of assistive and digital technologies into the curriculum content itself is not yet systematically developed. Given the nature of the Special Education field - where modern assistive tools, speech-technology applications, and digital diagnostic instruments play an essential role - students would benefit from more structured exposure to these technologies. Current course descriptions and practice components only partially address this area, resulting in uneven student preparedness in using technology-based interventions in inclusive and special-needs settings. Strengthening this component would better align the programme with contemporary professional requirements and improve graduates' readiness for technologically enhanced educational environments.

2.1.3. Following RTU's integration of RTU LA and RTU RA, several corrections were implemented in the Special Education study programme, including the addition of RTU LA as a second place of implementation, to harmonise its structure and ensure compliance with RTU's unified quality-management framework (SAR, pp. 445-450).

Key updates include:

1. Refinement of learning outcomes to strengthen alignment with national professional standards and current inclusive-education practices.
2. Restructuring of course content to increase focus on individualised learning, special-needs assessment, and inclusive classroom management.
3. Expansion of pedagogical practice components to ensure balanced experience in mainstream and special schools.
4. Enhancement of research-methodology courses to promote evidence-based decision-making in special education.

These corrections were reviewed and approved by the RTU Study Field Committee and the Senate following stakeholder consultations. The experts concluded that the adjustments have improved the coherence of course sequencing, increased consistency between regional implementations, and enhanced the practical relevance of the study programme.

2.1.4. RTU considers the "Special Education" study programme to have strong economic and social justification, as it directly responds to Latvia's national priority of developing an inclusive education system and to the identified shortage of special-education teachers (SAR, pp. 451-456).

According to the SAR, there is a significant labour-market demand for qualified specialists who can support children with disabilities and learning difficulties in both special and mainstream schools (SAR, pp. 451-453). The study programme's graduates are employed as special educators, support specialists, and inclusion coordinators in preschools, schools, rehabilitation centres, and local education departments.

Student enrolment has been stable over recent years, and the study programme attracts both new secondary-school graduates and experienced educators seeking further qualifications. For instance, in the 2023/2024 academic year, 41 students studied full-time, face-to-face across the entire study programme, whereas in the 2024/2025 academic year, 42 students studied full-time, face-to-face.

Up to the 2023/2024 academic year, full-time students made up around 40% of the cohort, with 60% studying part-time. In 2024/2025, this distribution shifted notably to 25% full-time and 75% part-time students (respectively - 42 and 124 students). According to RTU, this change resulted from targeted funding provided by the Ministry of Education and Science to support the preparation of special-education teachers through part-time studies, enabling employed teachers to obtain the qualification without suspending their professional duties.

Graduate employability exceeds 85% within six months after graduation, confirming strong alignment with labour-market needs. Feedback from employers highlights graduates' pedagogical preparedness, empathy, and ability to apply inclusive teaching methods effectively.

Experts were told in the RTU RA, that in this study programme the drop-out has been a problem, because younger students sometimes discover only during the first practice, that they are not ready to deal with difficult diagnoses. As a solution to this problem there is now an additional entrance test, to find out the motivation of students' candidates.

2.1.5. No applicable.

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

The Special Education study programme (code 42141) complies with the requirements of the study field Education and Pedagogy. It is coherent, socially relevant, and professionally strong, contributing significantly to Latvia's inclusive-education goals and addressing the shortage of qualified special-education teachers. The programme has a clear social and economic justification, responding to national needs for special-education teachers and showing stable enrolment and strong graduate employability. The programme functions effectively, its structure and implementation arrangements meet the criteria of this chapter.

Strengths:

1. Strong integration of theory-practise across all stages; ;
2. High social relevance addressing national demand for special-education professionals.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited internationalisation and English-taught course offerings.
2. Need for stronger integration of assistive and digital technologies in course content.
3. The drop-out has been a problem, because younger students sometimes discover only during the first practice, that they are not ready to deal with people who have difficult diagnoses.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. As learners with special needs may study special education study programmes in general education classes, in special classes or groups within general education institutions, or in special education institutions it is necessary to enhance the competences of future special education teachers with a wide range of study content and methodologies. The content of the first cycle (professional bachelor's) study programme "Special Education" consists of 240 credit points, where there are General education study courses (30 ECTS credits); Basic theoretical courses and information technology courses in the field (54 ECTS credits); Professional specialization courses in the field (99 ECTS credits); Elective courses (9 ECTS credits); Internship (30 ECTS credits); Final state examination, including the development and defense of a bachelor's thesis or diploma project (18 ECTS credits) (SAR Annex "27.4. Speciālā izglītība studiju plāns ar mācībspēkiem ENG.xlsx").

It is important to note that 7 fields of education according to the competence approach in the

curriculum (21 CP) is included in the study content: Language; Social and Civic; Cultural awareness and self-expression in art; Science; Mathematics; Technologies; Health and physical activities. There are also study courses (12 CP) devoted to “Work with Language and Speech Disorders”; Hearing Impairments (12 CP); “Vision Impairments” (12 CP); “Mental disorders” (12 CP) (SAR, Annex “27.4. Speciālā izglītība studiju plāns ar mācībspēkiem ENG.xlsx”).

Within the Professional specialization courses in the field of 99 ECTS credits there are 7 modules (15 ECTS each), covering the following areas: Intellectual Disabilities, Hearing Impairments, Visual Impairments, Speech and Language Disorders, Learning Disabilities (including mixed developmental disorders), Autism, and Sign Language (SAR, p. 442). Modular system approach is used to widen the opportunities for students to make their own combination for the study content. Experts can see that some of the modules widen the obligatory study content and some are complimentary (SAR, Annex 28.4 for course descriptions).

Study content corresponds to the legal framework (SAR, Annex “23.4 for a table showing compliance with the national education standard 444”; Annex “24.4 for a table showing qualification compliance with the professional standard”). As the Study programme's aim is “To prepare professionally competent, lifelong-learning-oriented special education teachers” and “The objectives include acquisition of theoretical knowledge, practical pedagogical experience, development of research skills, professional development and promotion of civic engagement, ensuring comprehensive professional preparation.” (SAR, p. 438), experts concluded that the study content included in the study programme covers all the necessary range of knowledge and skills of the professional area.

It should be noted that field professionals are involved in the process of formulating the learning outcomes. “International research and recommendations, and employer and professional organization feedback, also benchmarking against other EU universities and aligning with current trends in education.” (SAR, p. 444) has been considered in developing the study content of the study programme.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. During the onsite visit it was discovered that many students already have professional work experience in the field and teaching staff are active professionals in the field, so experts can agree that “the study process incorporates methods that foster student interaction, such as discussions about real industry issues or the modelling of learning situations” (SAR, p. 445). A student-centered approach is used during the study process that provides individualization, personalization and differentiation. Methods and organizational forms are used as “an interactive and problem-based lectures, discussions, seminars, practical tasks, simulations, and project development, as well as individual, pair, or group work.” (SAR, p. 445). The expert group was told during the onsite visit that students are provided with the opportunity to visit educational institutions also within the study courses outside the framework of internship - “50% lectures and 50% practical sessions, with an increased emphasis on practical sessions in professional specialization courses.” (SAR, p. 445). It was also emphasized during the onsite visit that in the research work students can explore problems of interest within their field across successive study courses. It was told by the teaching staff and students as well.

The implementation of the study programme is primarily planned for weekends to enable students to combine work and studies, but students’ preferences will be considered, and the schedule may be adjusted according to the majority’s interests. This was approved by the target groups during the onsite visit.

When the employers were asked during the onsite visit about the competence level of graduates and students attending the internship and the answer was – students are dedicated, purposeful and exploring, they have become more technologically advanced.

Students are heard and their opinion is considered and great example was provided in SAR (p. 466) -

“taking into account the opinions of students, information materials on authorization on digital websites and systems and their use were improved, and changes were made to the class schedule to give full-time students the opportunity to work and practice in educational institutions during the first half of the day.”

Students are involved in the development of methodological materials, and the best practice examples are shared. Expert group was provided with the opportunity to visit the Special Education Laboratory / Special Education Centre during the onsite visit at RTU RA. It is a great source of information and ensures the practical aspect of the studies.

2.2.4. The study programme includes five pedagogical internships of 30 ECTS credits in total (SAR Annex “29.4_Student internship_Special education teacher.zip”) Teaching Practice I (3 CP) takes place in the 2nd semester, Teaching Practice II (3 CP) takes place in the 5th semester, Teaching Practice III (9 CP) takes place in the 6th semester, Teaching Practice IV (9 CP) takes place in the 7th semester and the last Teaching Practice (6 CP) is in the last semester. In the SAR Annex 29.4 in the table, the connection indicated between the study courses and the content of the internship can be found, e.g. in the Teacher Practice III (9.0 ECTS credits) at 6th semester there is a skill “Able to diagnose developmental disorders under the guidance of a special educator” To be ready to do that, students should acquire the study content of the study course “Pedagogical Assessment of Developmental Disabilities” (4 CP) in the 2nd semester.

Internship I (3 ECTS) enables students to observe and analyze the educational process and the specific role of a special education teacher. Internship II (3 ECTS) links studies with practice, allowing students to observe experienced special education teachers and preschool teachers, their teaching and educational methods, including developmental delay correction methods. Internship III (9 ECTS) allows students to observe and analyze teaching and educational work in inclusive education, test special pedagogy methods, conduct developmental diagnostics, plan and perform teacher assistant duties, and participate in developing and implementing individual learning plans. Internship IV (9 ECTS) provides further insight into the work of special education teachers within a specific area of specialization. Internship V (6 ECTS) allows students to demonstrate their theoretical and practical competencies by conducting and presenting a research project commissioned by an educational institution or forming the empirical part of their bachelor thesis (SAR, p. 448). It must be concluded that all the internships are connected, sequentially deepening the enhancement of professional competence.

The organizational support is provided within the study programme - students receive individual support from a teacher-mentor in the educational institution and from the RTU internship coordinator (SAR, p. 448). The internship is implemented in accordance with the practice contract and there is a list of educational institutions provided by RTU (SAR, Annex “14_List of cooperation agreements.docx”). Students choose potential internship places themselves, but if necessary, the internship coordinator or study programme director helps to find students practice places.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. Looking at the examples given by RTU and included in the SAR (p. 450) it is concluded that Bachelor’s Thesis topics are directly related to the study content, e.g. “Developing information-searching skills in pupils with intellectual disabilities; Learning English for teenagers with intellectual disabilities in a special education institution; Learning geometric shapes in grades 1–3 for pupils with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities during mathematics lessons; Developing cooperation skills in primary school pupils with intellectual disabilities during lessons; Learning and using sign language to master mathematics content in grades 6 and 7 for pupils with hearing impairments; Support for Physical Education teachers in including pupils with autism spectrum disorders in physical education lessons, etc.”. These examples show relation not only to the area of special

education but also to the study fields of education at pre-school and primary school according to the competence approach in the curriculum.

It must be acknowledged that some particularly valuable final thesis developments by students are published by Latvian publishing houses (SAR, p. 450).

To support students in the study programme "Special Education" in developing a bachelor's thesis at the end of their studies there are two courses "Basics of a Teacher's Professional Activity. Study Paper I" (6CP) in Part A in the 1st semester and "Educational Research. Study Paper II" (6 CP) in Part A in the 2nd semester. The first phase of Bachelor's Thesis Development I (3 CP) takes place in the 7th semester and Bachelor's Thesis Development II (12 CP) in the 8th semester.

When analyzing the course descriptions (SAR Annex "28.4.1. Studiju kursu apraksti ENG.zip"), expert group paid attention to the recommended literature for the study courses "Basics of a Teacher's Professional Activity. Study Paper I" and "Educational Research. Study Paper II", Bachelor's Thesis Development I and Bachelor's Thesis Development II, there is just one source in English: "Cropley, A. (2002). Qualitative Research Methods. R.: Zinātne.". Experts believe that it is necessary to enhance students' skills to read books and articles on research skill and data analysis (published more recently) in foreign languages (as there are much less in Latvian) and sources analyzing international research data on their research topic. Experts must admit that students told during the onsite visit that they are encouraged by their teaching staff to read sources from data bases.

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

The diverse competences of future special education teachers are enhanced within the study programme "Speech therapy" as learners with special needs may study special education study programmes in general education classes, in special classes or groups within general education institutions, or in special education institutions. The experts concluded that the study content included in the study programme covers all the necessary range of knowledge and skills of the professional area. The research work students can explore problems of interest within their field across successive study courses. It must be concluded that all the internships are connected, sequentially deepening the enhancement of professional competence.

The field professionals are involved in the process of formulating the learning outcomes. International research and recommendations, and employer and professional organization feedback, also benchmarking against other EU universities and aligning with current trends in education has been considered in developing the study content of the study programme. Seven fields of education according to the competence approach in the curriculum are included in the study content: Language; Social and Civic; Cultural awareness and self-expression in art; Science; Mathematics; Technologies; Health and physical activities. There are 7 modules, covering the following areas: Intellectual Disabilities, Hearing Impairments, Visual Impairments, Speech and Language Disorders, Learning Disabilities (including mixed developmental disorders), Autism, and Sign Language (SAR, p. 442). Modular system approach is used to widen the opportunities for students to make their own combination for the study content.

Strengths:

1. Contextual relationships between the special education study content and all the fields of compulsory education according to the competence approach in the curriculum is included in the study programme.
2. There are 7 elective modules, covering the following areas: Intellectual Disabilities, Hearing Impairments, Visual Impairments, Speech and Language Disorders, Learning Disabilities (including mixed developmental disorders), Autism, and Sign Language provided to widen the opportunities for students to make their own combination for the study content.
3. The study content included in the study programme covers all the necessary range of knowledge

and skills of the professional area, like Language and speech disorders; Hearing Impairments; Vision Impairments; Mental disorders; Mixed developmental disabilities. That provides the basis for future professionals to work in different types of educational institutions.

4. A student-centered approach is used during the study process that provides individualization, personalization and differentiation.

5. Students are heard and their opinion is considered. Employers are satisfied with the competence level of graduates and students involved in the internship.

6. Students are involved in the development of methodological materials, and the best practice examples are shared.

7. All the internships are connected, sequentially deepening the enhancement of professional competence.

8. Some particularly valuable final thesis developments by students are published by Latvian publishing houses.

Weaknesses:

1. There are not enough sources in foreign languages included in recommended literature sources for the study courses supporting students' research skills development.

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. Studies take place at the RTU RA training block at Atbrīvošanas aleja 115, in Rezekne; and RTU LA training block at Liela street 14, in Liepāja. Experts visited both buildings and saw that the material, technical, and financial provision comply with specific features and conditions for the implementation of the study programme. As the general analysis is already provided in chapter 1.3. Of this report, here the focus is mostly on this study programme. For the acquisition of practical skills in the RTU RA training corps, visual arts, sewing, design workshops, maintenance training laboratory and choreography hall can be used. According to the SAR (p. 381), the RTU LA Centre for Pedagogy and Social Work (PSDC) plays a leading role in the implementation of the study programme, providing an appropriate teaching staff and technical base. Experts visited the Montessori-cabinet, and the Multisensory Room, which was installed in 2018, and is one of the most modern in the Baltic States. The high quality of facilities and innovative thinking are remarkable.

Experts also visited the library in the RTU RA and RTU LA. Students have access to the RTU library and its regional units in Rezekne and Liepāja. The collection thematically corresponds to the study programme "Preschool Teacher". Of all the information resources available to the library, about 12% of the items in the collection are a topic of this study programme.

According to the SAR (p.382), for the needs of the study programme "Preschool Teacher", databases offer information resources on various topics of the courses to be taught in the study programmes, for example, the EBSCO e-book collection contains approximately 28,000 electronic publications, connected to this study programme.

In 2024, the databases and other digital resources available in the RTU LA library were used in 24,400 connection sessions. Experts were told by students both in the RTU LA and in the RTU RA,

that they are pleased with the library-possibilities. The material and technical provision provided for the implementation of the study programme and its availability to students and teaching staff covers the needs for the study.

In RTU LA the library is open from 8.00 -19.00; there are about 65000 paper-books, 75% of them are on open shelves. Every day about 70 students visit the library, which is a good result, as in RTU LA there are about 1200 students. They have enough resources for the new books: about 15000 EUR per year. Also, final thesis can be found on open shelves from earlier years: now they are kept electronically only.

In Rezekne the library is open from 9.00 -17.00, but if needed, the times can be flexible. They can spend about 18000 EUR per year on literature, which they consider to be enough (for the education of about 6000 EUR is available, but it is hard to fix it exactly, as many books can be used in different programmes).

The academies are united with RTU now, which means that the libraries are united, too: 15 databases are available already, before this number was only 4. Libraries welcome structural reform warmly. Also, students are happy: both in the RTU LA and RTU RA they use databases actively for free, and they can do it at home, too.

Experts saw that the facilities both in RTU RA and RTU LA create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process. As summary of the tours a conclusion can be formulated: in both academies' experts saw specific richness.

Experts were told that the RTU RA is a kind of study center in this region in the context of physics, chemistry, health education and biology, as teachers from East-Latvian gymnasiums used to visit it for courses of additional education. In the RTU RA, there is a so-called 'creative attic' with extra possibilities for art students; 3D-printers are used in many courses and even by several schools in the community; science nights are very popular with about 400 participants in Rezekne. There are different exhibitions in buildings on campus. One building there was opened only 10 y. ago, with a very modern environment and equipment.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3. According to the SAR (p. 383), the calculations of the planned costs of the RTU LA study programme "Preschool Teacher" for full-time studies for 2025/26 use the base costs determined in 2025 (EUR 1867.60 per one study place), and the coefficient of the thematic field of education is 1.1; the cost coefficient in first cycle professional higher education study programmes is 1.0. The Ministry of Education and Science fixes the coefficient. According to the SAR (p. 383), the costs per a study place are calculated as next:

- The cost of one study place in 2025 is EUR 2 054.36 per study year.
- The number of study places financed from the State budget in 2025/26 is 30.
- The tuition fee for full-time studies per academic year (2025/26) is EUR 2 310.
- The fee for part-time studies is EUR 2,100.

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

The resources and infrastructure of RTU LA and RTU RA are fully sufficient for the high-quality, growth-oriented implementation of the study programme. The material and technical base necessary for the study programme, is constantly being updated and improved. Methodological materials are provided to support the development of literacy, language, mathematics, and social skills, as well as resources intended for parents.

Strengths:

1. Significant attention in the study process is devoted to the development of original teaching aids, which are promoted on the website for special education teachers. These resources are designed for learners with behavioral disorders, mixed developmental disorders, autism spectrum disorders, and hearing impairments.
2. The RTU RA is a study center in this region in the context of physics, chemistry, health education and biology, as teachers from East-Latvian gymnasiums used to visit it for courses of additional education.
3. As the RTU LA is the main institution for speech therapy in Latvia, this study programme is especially significant.
4. In the library 15 databases are available, before this number was only 4.

Weaknesses:

1. In both libraries there are only some (older, limited) versions of the study books on the topic of general education.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme will be implemented in Liepaja, too - as the RTU LA has expressed the readiness.

The material and technical base necessary for the study programme, is constantly being updated and improved. The RTU RA is a study center for the teachers from East-Latvian gymnasiums. The RTU LA is the main institution for speech therapy in Latvia. In the library 15 databases are available, before this number was only 4. The resources and infrastructure of RTU LA and RTU RA are fully sufficient for the high-quality, growth-oriented implementation of the study programme.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The Special Education study programme (42141) is implemented by a professionally competent and academically qualified teaching staff whose composition complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and institutional guidelines. According to SAR section 3.4.1. and SAR Annex "List of Academic staff_RTU LA_RTU RA", a total of 31 academic staff members are involved in delivering the programme from RTU RA, of whom the majority hold a Master's degree and more than 30% hold a Doctor's degree in pedagogy, psychology, or related fields and a total of 30 academic staff members are involved in the implementation of the study programme at RTU Liepaja Academy: 54% hold elected academic positions at Liepaja Academy, while 46% are employed in combined positions. The SAR Annex "List of Academic staff_RTU LA_RTU RA" states that there are professorship positions, associate professorships, assistant professorships, and lecturer positions. This structure ensures an appropriate balance of academic leadership, methodological expertise, and practical competence.

Staff biographies (SAR section 3.4.1. and Annex "Academic staff CV") indicate that 64% have more than 15 years of professional experience in special education, and 29% have more than 25 years, which significantly supports the study programme's capacity to integrate evidence-based practice with theoretical grounding.

The staff also demonstrates strong competencies in inclusive education, developmental psychology, behavioural support, and special pedagogical diagnostics - areas aligned with the learning outcomes of the study programme. Several lecturers combine academic duties with practical leadership roles in municipal education support centres or special education schools, strengthening the unity of pedagogical theory and authentic professional practice, as also confirmed during the on-site meetings.

Evidence from SAR and Annex “Scientific publications of academic staff” demonstrates that lecturers are active in national policy discussions regarding students with special needs, curriculum adaptation, and support strategies in mainstream settings. Their participation in the European Social Fund projects contributes to curriculum innovation and professional networking.

The study programme benefits from regular involvement of practitioners-psychologists, audiologists, speech therapists - who deliver specialised modules and supervise professional placements. This enhances the responsiveness of the curriculum to the rapidly evolving support systems developed by municipalities.

Regionally, the study programme plays a strategic role. Given the national shortage, the availability of qualified academic staff is of high systemic importance.

It can be concluded that academic staff qualifications fully support the achievement of the study programme’s aims and learning outcomes, while also responding to national labour market demands.

2.4.2. The institution has implemented transparent procedures for the recruitment and renewal of teaching staff, as defined by RTU internal regulations and confirmed in SAR chapter 3.4.3. During the reporting period, minor changes occurred due to retirement, workload re-distribution, and temporary health-related absences. These changes were mitigated through timely recruitment of qualified specialists with relevant professional experience in special education institutions and municipal support services.

According to the “List of changes in the teaching staff” (SAR 3.4.2. and Annex), three lecturers with extensive professional background in inclusive education, behavioural support and diagnostic assessment were integrated without negative impact on study programme continuity. The implementation of a mentoring system ensures that newly-involved lecturers receive methodological guidance and join internal discussions on learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and course alignment.

Interviews during the on-site visit confirmed that workload allocation is adjusted annually to ensure continuity of core courses, and that no interruptions in study course provision occurred. Replacement decisions are guided by academic competence, recent professional experience, and familiarity with Latvian education standards.

Given the regional dimension, the inclusion of specialists from local special education schools contributes to study programme relevance and labour-market alignment.

It can be concluded that the study programme management’s measures are sufficient to mitigate risks associated with staff turnover.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. The analysis of the staff’s academic biographies (SAR and Annex “Academic staff CV”) confirms that all members involved in the study programme comply with the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Over the last six years, each staff member either: published at least one peer-reviewed article (indexed nationally or internationally), or demonstrated more than five years of professional experience in special education institutions. For early-career lecturers (with less than six years in position), publications are proportionate to contract duration. Senior staff mostly exceed minimum requirements. Publication topics demonstrate coherence with study courses: behavioural

intervention frameworks, differentiated learning strategies, assistive communication systems, teacher competences in inclusive environments. SAR section 3.4.1. and Annex “Scientific publications of academic staff” confirms citation frequencies in Scopus and Web of Science databases. Several conference outputs are indexed and therefore contribute to academic traceability. Staff demonstrate continuous research engagement, with outputs linked to inclusive education, developmental disorders, and learning difficulties.

According to SAR section 3.4.1. and Annex “Scientific publications of academic staff”, over the last six years: 54 peer-reviewed publications have been produced. 18% are in Q1-Q2 journals indexed in Scopus/Web of Science. The remainder appear in Q3-Q4 journals or international conference proceedings. Examples of journals include: Sustainability, Frontiers in Psychology, Education and Pedagogy Studies, Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability. This selection indicates a clear focus on applied pedagogy, psychosocial development, and inclusive education methodologies. Participating in large-scale research projects (SAR, pp. 214–220), such as: National Research Programme “Education” (text literacy support), Erasmus+ “Empowering Mathematics Education for All”, Erasmus+ “Transformative Digital Learning”, Latvian Council of Science “Transformation of the Value of Education”, has provided staff with opportunities to integrate state-of-the-art didactic approaches into teaching. Staff presented research at 36 conferences: 14 international (Spain, Croatia, Poland, Lithuania), 22 national, including the reputable Society. Integration. Education conference.

The practical experience pathway is particularly valuable for this study programme: many lecturers concurrently work as psychologists, special educators and school support specialists, providing authentic cases, diagnostic tools, and organisational models aligned with contemporary legislative requirements.

It can be concluded that regulatory requirements are fully met, and, in several instances, exceeded.

2.4.5. Special Education study programme is implemented in RTU RA, and it requires close cooperation between RTU LA and RTU RA. The study programme demonstrates well-developed structural cooperation between LA and RA. SAR section 3.4.5. declares that cooperation takes place at several levels. Curriculum planning: lead lecturers coordinate learning outcomes, assessment strategies, literature lists, and digital content to ensure consistent implementation across campuses. Interdisciplinary integration: lecturers from psychology, speech therapy, developmental counselling, and inclusive pedagogy jointly support the module “Support in developmental disorders”.

The on-site visit interviews prove that digital platforms: MS Teams, ORTUS, and Moodle are used to share lecture materials, coordinate deadlines, consult students remotely, and co-assess assignments. Joint methodological seminars: annual events address diagnostic tools, behavioural risk management, and assistive technologies. Peer observation: junior staff receive feedback sessions, strengthening alignment with expected teaching standards. Regional stakeholder engagement: municipal support centres contribute to guest lectures, ensuring relevance to current school practices.

According to SAR section 3.4.5. and Annex “Statistical data on mobility of academic staff”, the study programme facilitated 14 outgoing mobilities (teaching/research), 6 incoming guest lecturers. Such mobility supports the acquisition of international comparative perspectives. The student-to-staff ratio (11:1) is lower than both national (14:1) and OECD (16:1) averages, allowing intensive supervision, which is particularly relevant for practice-based special education studies. Based on this evidence, cooperation mechanisms are well established and function effectively. On-site visits confirm that municipal specialists deliver guest lectures on individualised support plans, while school partners provide feedback on graduate preparedness. It can be concluded that cooperation mechanisms are structured, functioning and contribute to the study programme’s consistency.

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

The Special Education study programme is supported by academically qualified, professionally experienced and research-active staff. Their combined expertise strengthens the integration of theoretical insight with practical relevance, responding to national shortages in special education specialists. Cooperation structures are clearly established, and research output supports an evidence-based curriculum. Regional placement in RTU LA and RTU RA ensures the availability of trained personnel in areas experiencing demographic pressure.

Strengths:

1. Strong alignment of academic expertise with study programme needs, combining diagnostics, behavioural intervention and inclusive pedagogy.
2. Sustained high research output, including publications and indexed conference proceedings.
3. Significant practitioner involvement, supporting the transfer of authentic school-based experience.
4. Regional strategic importance in addressing national teacher shortages.

Weaknesses:

1. English language proficiency varies across staff, reducing potential for wider international dissemination.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The first cycle (professional bachelor) study programme's "Special Education" staff fully comply with national and institutional qualification requirements. All lecturers hold relevant degrees in pedagogy or related fields, supported by research achievements and extensive professional practice.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education", as evidenced by SAR Annex "Annex 23.4. Atbilstība standartam ENG.docx", which demonstrates this alignment.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the professional standard "Teacher" (approved on 12 June 2020), as evidenced by SAR Annex "Annex 24.4. Atbilstība profesijas standartam ENG.docx".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme's course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and comply with the requirements outlined in the Law of Higher Education Institutions. This is evidenced by the attached study course descriptions (SAR Annex "Annex 28.4.Studiju kursu modulu apraksti ENG.zip").

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme issues diplomas in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 202 "Procedure for Issuing State-Recognised Higher Education Qualification Documents". This is evidenced by the provided diploma sample (SAR Annex "Annex 19.4_Diploma_Diploma Supplement Sample_Special education_LV_EN.pdf").

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 733 "Regulations on the Scope of State Language Proficiency, the Procedure for the State Language Proficiency Examination, and the State Fee for the Language Proficiency Examination" regarding state-language proficiency requirements for academic staff. This is evidenced by the attached staff resumes (SAR Annex "Confirmation - knowledge of the foreign language.edoc") and the confirmation of state-language proficiency (SAR Annex "Confirmation - knowledge of the state language.edoc").

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme uses study agreements that comply with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Mandatory Provisions to Be Included in the Study Agreement". This is evidenced by the sample study agreement provided in SAR Annex "Sample of study agreement.zip".

- 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

The study programme provides students with the possibility to continue their studies at the University of Latvia in the study programme "Special Education Teacher or Speech Therapist Teacher" (This study programme at the LU is licensed only on 27th August 2025, therefore, the attached agreement does not include a mutual agreement in the context of this study programme).

- 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

RTU confirmation (SAR Annex "Confirmation - on compensation for losses.edoc" 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: Fully compliant

The attached annex (SAR Annex "Annex 25.4_Compliance with MK not_569_Special education.docx") confirms that the study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers' regulations.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme fully complies with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

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

The Special Education study programme is implemented by a team of academically qualified and professionally experienced staff who are actively engaged in research in the field. Their expertise contributes to the systematic integration of theoretical frameworks with practice-based approaches within the programme's curriculum. The distribution of staff responsibilities, including teaching, supervision, and research activities, demonstrates a clear organisational structure supported by established cooperation mechanisms. Staff research outputs are regularly incorporated into course content, ensuring that the curriculum is informed by current evidence and sector developments. Furthermore, the programme plays an important role in preparing specialists for regions affected by demographic pressures, addressing specific workforce needs through targeted training and sustained professional engagement.

Contextual relationships between the special education study content and all the fields of compulsory education according to the competence approach in the curriculum is included in the study programme. The study content included in the study programme covers all the necessary range of knowledge and skills of the professional area. A student-centered approach is used during the study process that provides individualization, personalization and differentiation. Students are heard and their opinion is considered. Employers are satisfied with the competence level of graduates and students involved in the internship. Students are involved in the development of methodological materials, and the best practice examples are shared. Some particularly valuable final thesis developments by students are published by Latvian publishing houses.

The study programme will be implemented in Liepaja, too - as the RTU LA has expressed the readiness. The material and technical base necessary for the study programme, is constantly being updated and improved. The RTU RA is a study center for the teachers from East-Latvian gymnasiums. The RTU LA is the main institution for speech therapy in Latvia. In the library 15 databases are available, before this number was only 4. The resources and infrastructure of RTU LA and RTU RA are fully sufficient for the high-quality, growth-oriented implementation of the study programme.

Evaluation of the study programme "Special Education"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Special Education"

Short-term recommendations

1. Provide targeted professional English language development to increase international publication potential (2026./2027.).

2.To add sources in foreign languages to recommended literature sources for the study courses supporting students' research skills development till next academic year.

3. To continue developing the stronger entrance test, to find out the motivation of students' candidates (as a solution for the dropping out problem).

4. To renew the agreement with the LU regarding the continuation of education, as the LU's new study programme "Special Education Teacher or Speech Therapist Teacher" was licensed only on 27th August 2025.

Long-term recommendations

1. To broaden internationalisation by expanding English-taught course offerings or strengthening cooperation with international partners, visiting lecturers, and exchange programmes.

2. To further integrate digital and assistive technologies into course content to enhance inclusivity, innovation, and technology-supported teaching and learning.

II - "Primary education teacher" ASSESSMENT

II - "Primary education teacher" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The first cycle professional higher education study programme "Primary Education Teacher" (code 42141) is implemented within the study field Education and Pedagogy and is fully compliant with the objectives, content, and standards defined for this field in Latvia, as demonstrated by the structured alignment between study programme aims, learning outcomes, module content, and the national regulatory framework - including detailed mappings of course learning outcomes to study programme outcomes and to the Teacher Professional Standard. The study programme is offered under the structure of RTU, with implementation at RTU LA and RTU RA, and leads to the professional qualification "Teacher" at EQF/LQF level 6 (SAR, pp. 395-397).

The aim of the study programme is to prepare professional, innovative, and socially responsible teachers capable of providing competence-based education for pupils in grades 1-6 (SAR, pp. 396-398). The study programme's learning outcomes, content, and professional qualification correspond to the goals of the study field Education and Pedagogy, which emphasises applied research, inclusive education, and pedagogical innovation.

The curriculum is built upon a strong pedagogical and psychological foundation. It includes general education sciences, subject methodology, and research-based practice. Students gain competences in designing inclusive learning environments, developing pupils' transversal skills, and applying digital technologies in teaching.

The study programme is aligned with the Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 and the National Development Plan 2021-2027, both of which identify teacher education and digital transformation in education as national priorities. Cooperation with municipalities and schools ensures close alignment with labour-market needs and teacher qualification standards.

2.1.2. The "Primary Education Teacher" study programme (code 42141) is designed as a professional bachelor's study programme leading to the Professional Bachelor's Degree in Teacher Education and the Qualification of a Teacher, corresponding to EQF/LQF level 6. The title, aims, outcomes, and qualification are internally consistent and reflect national education priorities and labour-market demands, as confirmed by experts through the study programme's systematic alignment with LQF/EQF level 6 descriptors, the Teacher Profession Standard, and the detailed

mapping of study courses to study programme learning outcomes, as well as the coherence observed between compulsory modules (Grades 1-3 and 4-6), progression of study content, and admission requirements.

The study programme aim is to ensure graduates can design and implement inclusive, competence-based teaching and foster students' critical thinking and creativity. Learning outcomes are expressed as measurable competences aligned with EQF level 6 descriptors: analytical understanding of educational theory, ability to apply subject-specific methodologies, digital literacy, research skills, and professional ethics (SAR, pp. 398-400).

The duration and scope — 240 credit points (four years) — comply with national regulations for professional bachelor's degrees. The study programme includes general education, field-specific, and professional practice modules. The sequence of study courses ensures progression from general pedagogical foundations to advanced subject didactics and professional practice (SAR, pp. 400-402). The language of implementation is Latvian, consistent with national school requirements, while selected readings and Erasmus+ partnerships provide international exposure. Admission requirements include completion of secondary education, aptitude for pedagogical work, and compliance with RTU Senate regulations.

2.1.3. In connection with RTU's institutional restructuring, the Primary Education Teacher study programme underwent significant corrections to harmonise its structure and quality-management processes across implementation places (SAR, pp. 404-408).

The main updates include:

1. Alignment of learning outcomes and assessment criteria between RTU Liepāja and RTU Rēzekne Academies;
2. Adjusted credit-point distribution to ensure equal emphasis on theoretical and practical training;
3. Revised pedagogical practice structure and evaluation to ensure standardised supervision quality;
4. Strengthened research-methodology component, improving students' ability to conduct applied educational research.

The corrections were initiated after internal evaluation and stakeholder feedback, then approved by the Study Field Council and the RTU Senate (SAR, pp. 405-407). These adjustments enhanced the internal coherence and comparability of study results across regional sites.

2.1.4. The "Primary Education Teacher" study programme has clear economic and social justification, rooted in Latvia's sustained need for qualified teachers in regional and national school systems (SAR, pp. 408-418). The SAR highlights the country's teacher shortage, ageing workforce, and the growing importance of inclusive education.

The study programme directly contributes to the Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 by preparing teachers capable of implementing modern teaching methods and supporting diverse learners. Cooperation with municipalities ensures that practice placements are available in urban and rural schools, fostering regional development (SAR, pp. 410-412).

Student enrolment has remained stable, with a gradual increase in applications in 2023/2024 (from 168 in 2022/2023 to 169 in 2023/2024). Since 2024, state budget funding has also become available for part-time students, leading to an increase in the number of part-time learners in remote study programme (from 84 in 2023/2024 to 118 in 2024/2025). The majority of students are female, with an increasing number of mature learners entering the study programme as career changers.

Graduate employability is consistently high — above 85% according to data provided in the SAR (pp. 415-416). Many graduates are immediately employed in the schools where they completed pedagogical practice. Employer feedback confirms satisfaction with graduates' competence, professional ethics, and preparedness for inclusive classroom teaching.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The first cycle professional higher education study programme "Primary Education Teacher" (code 42141) complies with the requirements of the study field Education and Pedagogy. It demonstrates a coherent structure, strong professional orientation, and significant social relevance, effectively addressing the national and regional demand for qualified primary teachers. Minor development areas include further strengthening internationalisation, expanding digital learning integration, and refining coordination between implementation places.

Strengths:

1. Clear alignment with the study field Education and Pedagogy and national qualification standards;
2. Strong social relevance and high employability rate above 85%;
3. Effective collaboration with schools, municipalities, and professional bodies.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited internationalisation and few English-language study opportunities;
2. Digital pedagogy and interdisciplinary collaboration need further enhancement.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The first-cycle professional higher education (Bachelor's) study programme "Primary Education Teacher" has been developed in accordance with legal and political document framework: Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education", the Professional Standard for Teachers, Cabinet of Ministers regulations no. 569 "Regulations on the Education and Professional Qualifications of Teachers and the Procedure for Professional Development of Teachers", the National Centre for Education's project "Competence Approach to Learning Content" - Skola2030 (SAR, p.406, Annex 23.2_Compliance of the study programme with the national education standard.docx, Annex 24.2_Compliance of the study programme with the Teacher Professional Standard.docx, Annex 25.2_Compliance with MK not_569_Primary education teacher.docx), Guidelines for the Development of Education 2021-2027; Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030; National Development Plan of Latvia 2021-2027; Guidelines for Science, Technological Development and Innovation 2021-2027; Latvian Smart Specialisation Strategy (SAR, p. 402). Study programme was developed in 2020 at Liepaja University together with cooperation partners - the University of Latvia, Daugavpils University and Rēzekne Academy of Technology, implementing the SAM project "Reduction of fragmentation of study programmes in LiepU" (No. 8.2.1.0/18/I/002). (SAR, p. 402). The study programme is based on a student-centred approach. The demand of the job-market has been considered as the study programme provides for qualified teacher training in grades 1-3 of the first stage of primary education and grades 4-6 of the second stage of primary education (SAR, p. 402).

The content of the study programme consists of study courses in the amount of 240 credit points. There are 30 CP of "Humanities and Social Sciences Study Courses", 54 CP of "Basic theoretical knowledge courses and information technology courses for the sector (professional field of activity)" in Part A, the compulsory modules "Primary education teacher (grades 1- 3)" (30 CP) and "Primary education teacher (grades 4- 6)" (39 CP) (SAR, pp. 406-407). It is important that the areas of study specified in the mandatory curriculum of the basic education standard: language (Latvian and English), social and civic (Social Sciences, History), cultural understanding and self-expression in art (Visual Arts, Music, Art of Movement, Literature), technology (Design and Technology, Computer

Science), science (Natural Science), mathematics, health and physical activity are included (SAR Annex - 27.2_Study programme plan_Primary Education Teacher.xlsx). Study courses are designed to not only foster the development of student's theoretical knowledge and methodological skills but also the skills to integrate the study content, e.g., how to integrate visual arts, music and movement arts into the learning process; the possibilities of integrating the content of the health and physical activity field into the learning process in primary school (SAR, p. 407).

There are 30 CP of Elective Modules provided for students to study starting from the third year of study: 1) "Professional competence in preschool methodological work" or 2) "Diversity competence in inclusive education" or 3) "Content and learning approaches of preschool learning areas" or 4) "Music teacher" (SAR, p. 407).

RTU has provided expert group with additional information after the on-site visit explaining how many students had chosen which elective module within this study programme. There are 2 modules which have been chosen by students in RTU LA and RTU RA: "Professional competence in preschool methodological work" and "Diversity competence in inclusive education". But the elective module "Content and learning approaches of preschool learning areas" has been chosen by 10 students in RTU RA in 2023/2024. Since then, no students have chosen the module "Content and learning approaches of preschool learning areas". No one has ever chosen this module and it seems that it is not offered in RTU LA. So the expert group has some doubts that there is a reasonable justification to offer this elective module in the future.

The elective Module "Music Teacher" has been chosen only in RTU LA but not in RTU RA. But there is such a great demand for Music Teachers in Latgale and Selija Regions in Latvia that this choice should be promoted. Experts were wondering why only "Music Teacher" was offered and no other study subjects? Discussing this issue during the onsite visit with students and graduates it was admitted that they would be happy to have a bigger choice, e.g., sports as well.

Looking at the content of the Elective modules experts were surprised that choir conducting was not included in the study course content (SAR Annex - 28.2_Course descriptions of study programme_Primary Education Teacher_ENG.pdf - was researched). Considering the fact that choir singing is very important part of Latvian culture and you cannot expect that the skills of choir singing is going to develop later on when pupils reach the age of form 7, there are choirs at primary school period formed in almost every school and basic knowledge of choir conducting should be included in the study content of future teachers who choose the elective module "Music Teacher". The expert group is supportive of elective module "Diversity competence in inclusive education" as inclusive education becomes more and more topical in the job market, it was emphasized also by the employers during the onsite visit.

There is a good connection between two study programmes within the study field - "Preschool Teacher" and "Primary Education Teacher": "The content of the study programme is designed in such a way that graduates of the short-cycle professional higher education study programme "Preschool Teacher" have the opportunity to continue their studies in the 3rd year, obtaining a bachelor's degree, choosing to acquire an additional qualification in the relevant field of education and Level 6 professional qualification (see Table 3.2.1.2)." (SAR, p. 412).

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. The aim of the study programme is: "to ensure the acquisition of competitive and high-quality, internationally comparable professional higher education and teacher qualification by acquiring the necessary professional competencies, which are determined by the Standard of the Teaching Profession, for work in the first stage of basic education." (SAR, p. 395) analysing the competences of the study programme (SAR, p. 396) students are expected to perform "planning, organization and management of pedagogical activity for the improvement of the pedagogical process, in accordance with social needs and current needs of educational science and practice" independently,

purposefully and responsibly. So the study programme employs professionals from various sectors and educational institutions to conduct certain courses (SAR, p. 414). During the onsite visit students admitted that peer-communication, discussing real industry problems or modeling learning situations is promoted. The teaching staff is open to questions. "Collaboration and social interaction, reflection and self-assessment" is encouraged to foster student's individual involvement, responsibility and open-mindedness.

Individual approach to each student's individual needs is highly valued by the students as many of them already work in educational institutions and flexibility must be applied to the organization of the study process; "dialogue between lecturers and students on the content, forms of organization and methods used" (SAR, p. 414) are promoted. During the onsite visit employers admitted that students - future teachers - are applying the student-centered approach to support the growth of the learner and provide the necessary support to improve their learning.

Teaching staff admitted during the onsite visit that students are encouraged to carry out research within study courses to support the development of bachelor paper, students also admitted that they can choose their individual topics of research within study courses which support their global research interests (usually based on the problems discovered in their work experience).

2.2.4. The internship is implemented in accordance with the practice contract and there is a list of educational institutions provided by RTU (SAR Annex - 14_List of cooperation agreements.docx). Students choose potential internship places themselves, but, if necessary, the internship coordinator or study programme director helps to find students' practice places (SAR, p. 416). Teaching staff and students were telling the expert group during the onsite visit that this is a coordinated process and students receive guidance before they go for internship, and they are consulted when needed and supported by practice coordinator at RTU RA and RTU LA also during the practice when needed - practice seminars are held. There is the final seminar - the defense of the internship. The overall assessment of the practice consists of both the assessment of the academic staff - internship coordinator and teacher-mentor in the educational institution for the performance of internship tasks, and the assessment of the student's self-analysis and presentation in defense of the internship (SAR, p. 416). To provide an example, the balance of evaluation components for Practice IV is: self-evaluation - 10%; final seminar: internship presentation - 30%; mentor rating - 40%; Rating of practice materials - 20% (SAR Annex "Description of the organization of the internship for students in the first cycle of professional higher education bachelor's study programme "Primary Education Teacher" (code 42141)").

Analysing the content of each Practice experts can conclude that Practice I is focused on the observation of study process in forms 1-6. Practice II - to improve the skills of planning and organizing the pedagogical process in grades 1-3 of primary school. Practice III - to improve the skills of planning and organizing the pedagogical process in grades 4-6 of primary school. Practice IV - to gain a practice-based understanding of inclusive education. It is concluded that the aim and tasks of the internship are in accordance with the chosen module learned (SAR Annex - "Description of the organization of the internship for students in the first cycle of professional higher education bachelor's study programme "Primary Education Teacher" (code 42141)"). It was mentioned during the onsite visit by employers during the onsite visit that students have tasks to observe specifically the cooperation between teacher and parents, as well as participate in the organisation of events for parents, but expert group did not find any task included in the description of the internships. This could be a good thing to include this as a task to motivate students to research the specifics of collaboration between partners "Teacher-Student-Parent".

Experts agree that the implementation of practical tasks promotes students' independence, responsibility and ability to use previously acquired theoretical knowledge in the professional field of primary education (grades 1-3 and 4-6), as well as in the elective module and employers seemed to be satisfied with the quality of future teachers' competences.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. To support students in the study programme "Primary Education Teacher" in developing a bachelor's thesis at the end of their studies there are two courses "Basics of a Teacher's Professional Activity. Study Paper I" (6CP) in Part A in the 1st semester and "Educational Research. Study Paper II" (6 CP) in Part A in the 4th semester. The first phase of Bachelor's Thesis Development I (3 CP) takes place in the 7th semester and Bachelor's Thesis Development II (12 CP) in the 8th semester. (SAR Annex - 27.2_Study programme plan_Primary Education Teacher.xlsx). Till now the defense of bachelor's theses has taken place in 2023 and 2024. It is described in the SAR (p. 418) that: "The topics of the works cover various aspects of the work of a primary education teacher - development of methodological solutions and research into implementation in the acquisition of various topics in the fields of study; promotion of pupils' literacy, research skills, digital literacy, design thinking, critical thinking and problem-solving skills; implementation of inclusive education, performance of formative assessment; development of pupils' values and virtues, etc."

When analyzing the course descriptions (SAR Annex - 28.2_Course descriptions of study programme_Primary Education Teacher_ENG.pdf), expert group paid attention to the recommended literature for the study courses "Basics of a Teacher's Professional Activity. Study Paper I" and "Educational Research. Study Paper II", "Bachelor's Thesis Development I" and "Bachelor's Thesis Development II", and there is just one source in English: "Cropley, A. (2002). Qualitative Research Methods. R.: Zinātne". Experts believe that it is necessary to enhance students' skills to read books and articles on research skill and data analysis (published more recently) in foreign languages (as there are much less in Latvian) and sources analyzing international research data on their research topic. Experts must admit that students told during the onsite visit that they are encouraged by their teaching staff to read sources from data bases.

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

Employers highly value the study programme content, and graduates and students already entering the job market. Study content and organization of the study programme supports the acquisition of the necessary professional competencies, which are determined by the Standard of the Teaching Profession, for work in the first stage of basic education. Study courses are designed to not only foster the development of a student's theoretical knowledge and methodological skills but also the skills to integrate the study content.

There are Elective Modules provided for students to study starting from the third year of study: 1) "Professional competence in preschool methodological work" or 2) "Diversity competence in inclusive education" or 3) "Content and learning approaches of preschool learning areas" or 4) "Music teacher", but the expert group has raised the issue to reconsider the choices offered in the future as not all of the modules are chosen by students lately and the job market demands some other topical study subjects to widen the competitiveness of the future teachers after the graduation.

Peer-communication, discussing real industry problems or modeling learning situations is promoted. The teaching staff is open to questions. Individual approach to each student's individual needs is highly valued by the students as many of them already work in educational institutions and flexibility must be applied to the organization of the study process.

The implementation of practical tasks promotes students' independence, responsibility and ability to use previously acquired theoretical knowledge in the professional field of primary education (grades 1-3 and 4-6), as well as in the elective module and employers seemed to be satisfied with the quality of future teachers' competences.

The topics of the research papers cover various aspects of the work of a primary education teacher.

Strengths:

1. It is important that all the areas of study content specified in the mandatory curriculum of the basic education standard (language, social and civic, cultural understanding and self-expression in art, technology, science, mathematics, health and physical activity) are included in the study content of the study programme.
2. Study courses are designed to not only foster the development of student's theoretical knowledge and methodological skills but also the skills to integrate the study content.
3. The demand of the job-market has been considered as the study programme provides for qualified teacher training in grades 1-3 of the first stage of primary education and grades 4-6 of the second stage of primary education.
4. The elective module "Diversity competence in inclusive education" is an important addition to the study content of the study programme as inclusive education becomes more and more topical in the job market.
5. The content of the study programme is designed in such a way that graduates of the short-cycle professional higher education study programme "Preschool Teacher" can continue their studies in first cycle professional (bachelor's) study programme "Primary Education Teacher".
6. The study programme employs professionals from various sectors and educational institutions to conduct certain courses. Teaching staff is open to questions – peer-communication, discussing real industry problems or modeling learning situations is promoted. Individual approach to each student's individual needs is highly valued by the students.
7. Internship as a process is well organized and supported. It is focused on the observation of study process in forms 1-6, improvement of the skills of planning and organizing the pedagogical process in grades 1-3 and grades 4-6 of primary school, as well as on chosen module learned.

Weaknesses:

1. The elective module "Content and learning approaches of preschool learning areas" has not been chosen by students in RTU RA since 2023/2024. No one has ever chosen this module in RTU LA. The expert group considers there is no reasonable justification to offer this elective module in the future.
2. Elective Module "Music Teacher" has been chosen only in RTU LA but not in RTU RA.
3. There are no other study subjects offered as elective modules.
4. There is no basic knowledge of choir conducting included in the study content of future teachers who choose the elective module "Music Teacher".
5. There are no tasks in the internship descriptions to motivate students to research the specifics of collaboration between partners "Teacher-Student-Parent".
6. There are not enough sources in foreign languages included in recommended literature sources for the study courses supporting students' research skills development.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

- 2.3.1. The studies take place at RTU RA training block at Atbrīvošanas street 115, in Rezekne; and RTU LA training block at Liela street 14, in Liepāja. Experts visited both buildings. According to the

SAR (p. 419), and the site visit, experts saw in the RTU RA and in the RTU LA that the material, technical and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. More analysis is already provided in chapter 1.3.

During the site visit, experts saw in the RTU RA and in the RTU LA that the material, technical and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. For the sports and interests, premises are provided for sports classes, choir activities, acquisition of professional and interest education programmes. For the acquisition of practical skills in the RA training block, visual arts, sewing, design workshops, nutrition education laboratory, and choreography hall can be used. Experts also visited the Montessori-cabinet in LA. The Laboratory of Social Pedagogy and Rehabilitation Technologies provide an experimental base for approbation of scientific research. Experts saw all the facilities and prized the high quality of them and innovative thinking of the staff.

Experts visited the library in RTU RA and RTU LA. The collection thematically corresponds to the study programme. The academies are united with RTU now, which means that the libraries are united, too: 15 databases are available already, before this number was only 4. Libraries welcome structural reform warmly. Also, students are happy: both in the LA and RA they use databases actively for free, and they can do it at home, too.

In 2024, the databases and other digital resources available in the RTU LA library were used in 24,400 connection sessions. Experts were told by students both in the RTU LA and in the RTU RA, that they are pleased with the library's possibilities. The material and technical provision provided for the implementation of the study programme and its availability to students and teaching staff covers the needs for the study. Experts saw that the facilities both in RTU RA and RTU LA create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3. Experts found that the financing of the study base ensures access to education and helps to develop the study programme, as it ensures stable and regular financing.

In the RTU RA, costs per student from state budget funds tend to increase (compared to 2023): the Latvian average in 2021 was 12 950, and the OECD average 2021 - 12 703 (SAR, p. 422).

From SAR Table 3.3.3.1. one can read that the number of full-time budget students in 2024 was 38 (+ one fee student), and the number of part-time budget students was 47. To keep the number of students stable, measures are taken to control the dropout of students: for example, the programme directors deal with every case personally. The minimum number of students in a first-cycle study programme within a single study course is 30. In cases where the minimum number of students cannot be ensured, but the study programme includes joint study activities, the minimum number of students in a first cycle study programme is 16, SAR (p. 424).

The calculation of the costs of the study programme "Primary Education Teacher" for full-time studies (for 2025/26) uses the base costs, fixed in 2025 (EUR 1867.60 per place of study). The coefficient of the thematic field of "Teacher Education and Educational Sciences" is 1.4, The cost coefficient in first-level professional higher education study programmes is 1.0. The cost of one study place in 2025 is EUR 2 614.64. The number of study places financed from the State budget in 2025/26 is 20, (SAR, p. 423). As calculations of the planned costs of "Part-time Primary Education Teacher" for 2025/26, the cost of one study place in 2025 is EUR 1 960.98. The tuition fee for full-time studies is EUR 2560, and for part-time studies EUR 2 100 per year. In total, the study programme "Primary Education Teacher" covers 15% of the expenses from the study field "Pedagogy and Education".

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

The material and technical provision provided for the implementation of the study programme, including the acquisition of mandatory and optional modules, is well developed. The facilities both in RTU RA and RTU LA create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process.

Strengths:

1. The material and technical base necessary for the implementation of the study programme is constantly being updated and improved both in the RTU RA and RTU LA.
2. In the library, there are 15 databases actively available.
3. The RTU RA is an active center of the local community as they organize both additional courses for teachers, and nights of science (annually).

Weaknesses: Not identified

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

In the library, the collection thematically corresponds to the study programme; there are 15 databases actively available.

In total, the study programme "Primary Education Teacher" covers 15% of the expenses from the study field "Pedagogy and Education".

The material and technical provision is provided for the implementation of the study programme. The facilities guarantee prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. Evidence is present that the academic staff of the Primary Education Teacher study programme are highly qualified, professionally experienced, and committed to both pedagogical and scientific excellence.

According to the SAR chapter 3.4.1, the study programme involves 78 academic staff (RTU RA - 41, RTU LA - 37 members, including 2 guest lecturers). The majority of the teaching staff hold a Master's degree in education (62%), while a smaller but significant proportion possess a doctoral degree in pedagogy, psychology or related fields (38%), as evidenced by the Academic Staff CVs and the consolidated List of Academic Staff of RTU LA and RTU RA (Annex Academic staff CVs of RTU LA and RTU RA; Annex List of academic staff RTU LA and RTU RA) all lecturers meet the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and RTU internal regulations. The average pedagogical experience of the academic staff is about 23 years, with 63% having over 15 years of professional teaching experience in schools or preschools. More than 20% of them combine academic work with leadership roles (school principals, municipal experts, or educational methodologists), ensuring a strong connection between theory and practice. The average age of the academic staff is more than 50 years, demonstrating a balanced generational structure that combines experience and innovation.

Senior lecturers provide mentoring and continuity, while younger staff contribute expertise in digital pedagogy, inclusive education, and modern assessment methodologies. According to SAR Annex

“Confirmation - knowledge of the foreign language”, staff demonstrate proficiency in Latvian and English (minimum B2-C1 level). This ensures their ability to participate in international research networks, Erasmus+ mobility, and conferences abroad. The study programme has also benefited from visiting professors and guest lecturers from partner universities, including the University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) and institutions in Spain and Poland.

The academic staff maintain strong engagement in research. Over the last six years, 54 peer-reviewed articles have been published by staff affiliated with this programme. Of these, 18% are indexed in Q1-Q2 journals, including Sustainability, Frontiers in Psychology, and Education and Pedagogy Studies. The remaining publications appear in Proceedings of RTU, Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, and national conference proceedings. The staff have also authored textbooks, monographs, and methodological guides that are widely used across Latvia, including works on reflective teaching, inclusive education, and educational psychology. The combination of applied research and practical teaching experience ensures that the study content is grounded in evidence-based methodology. Regional relevance is a distinctive strength.

The academic teams in RTU LA and RTU RA act as regional centres for teacher education, addressing labour market needs in Latvia. Collaboration with municipalities and schools ensures that programme outcomes align with the needs of regional education systems. It can be concluded that the qualifications, research activity, and professional engagement of the teaching staff fully support the achievement of study programme learning outcomes and ensure high-quality implementation in both regions.

2.4.2. Evidence is present that RTU maintains a proactive, transparent, and quality-oriented approach to managing changes in the composition of the teaching staff. According to SAR Annex “List of changes in the teaching staff made in the study programme” and SAR (3.4.2), between 2021 and 2024, eight changes occurred in the academic composition of the Primary Education Teacher study programme: four at RTU LA and four at RTU RA. The changes resulted mainly from retirements, health-related departures, and workload redistribution following the integration into RTU’s institutional structure. Importantly, these staff replacements were executed without negative impact on study programme delivery or learning outcomes.

Recruitment procedures are guided by the RTU Regulation on Election and Qualification of Academic Staff (RTU Senate Decision No. 633, 30 May 2022), ensuring transparent competition and selection based on pedagogical experience, scientific competence, and alignment with programme content. Each vacancy announcement specifies the required qualifications, research direction, and teaching competencies, while the decision process includes representatives from both RTU LA and RTU RA to ensure parity and equal standards across regions.

The incoming lecturers are characterized by strong professional backgrounds: many hold dual roles in municipal or national education institutions, acting as school principals, senior methodologists, or early education specialists. For example, a recently appointed lecturer at RTU RA has 20 years of preschool experience and 10 years as an expert at the State Education Content Centre, ensuring deep understanding of the national curriculum reforms. Another new staff member at RTU LA combines a doctoral degree with leadership experience in a preschool institution, strengthening the link between academia and practice. RTU implements structured mentoring and integration mechanisms for new academic staff. Each new lecturer is assigned a senior mentor who supports adaptation to RTU’s digital systems (ORTUS, Moodle), quality assurance procedures, and research project participation. Mentoring also includes peer observations, feedback sessions, and participation in joint curriculum meetings. These activities are coordinated by study programme directors and monitored by the Centre for Academic Excellence, which provides methodological and didactic training for new and existing lecturers.

Evidence from the on-site visit indicates that mentoring and teamwork have not only mitigated risks of staff turnover but also enhanced cohesion and consistency between both academies. New

lecturers benefit from shared course materials, joint online discussions, and structured co-teaching opportunities. In the student surveys (SAR Annex “Statistical data on student feedback”, SAR 3.4.2), learners emphasized continuity of course quality despite staff changes, highlighting accessibility, responsiveness, and consistent academic support. Thus, RTU’s mechanisms ensure that staff turnover is managed effectively, sustaining the integrity of the study programme and even strengthening its professional dimension through new expertise.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. The compliance of all academic staff with the Law on Higher Education Institutions is confirmed through SAR Annex “Scientific publications of academic staff” and Annex “Academic staff CVs of RTU LA and RTU RA”. Over the past six years (2018–2024), the study programme’s academic team produced 54 peer-reviewed articles, 3 monographs, and 5 methodological textbooks.

Approximately 18% of all publications are in Q1-Q2 journals indexed in Scopus and WoS - including Sustainability, Frontiers in Psychology, and Education and Pedagogy Studies. Another 30% appear in Q3-Q4 journals such as Education Inquiry, Baltic Journal of Education, and Problems of Education in the 21st Century. The remaining publications are presented in national conference proceedings, RTU’s Scientific Journal of Education, and pedagogical collections of the Liepāja and Rēzekne academies.

Staff who have joined the study programme more recently, or whose role is primarily practice-based, comply through professional experience exceeding five years in general or preschool education. According to the CVs, all staff meet this requirement, with an average of over 20 years of teaching or leadership practice. This combination of scholarly productivity and extensive practical experience creates a robust academic environment where theory and classroom application are equally valued.

Furthermore, the study programme encourages staff to link research and teaching: publications often originate from course-related projects, case studies, or collaborative initiatives with students. Methodological handbooks, such as Integrated Learning in Primary Education and Reflective Pedagogy for Inclusive Classrooms, are directly used in courses and teacher training workshops.

The evidence indicates a healthy balance between research-oriented and practice-oriented lecturers, ensuring compliance and diversity of expertise within the teaching team.

2.4.5. The cooperation between teaching staff in RTU LA and RTU RA represents one of the strongest features of the study programme. It fully aligns with the ESG 2015 principle of quality as the result of interaction between teaching staff, students, and the learning environment.

Each study course is co-implemented by lecturers from both academies, coordinated through a clearly defined system of academic collaboration. One lecturer is designated as the course coordinator, responsible for maintaining academic coherence, aligning content, and overseeing assessment standards. Joint course design meetings are organized monthly via MS Teams and ORTUS, supplemented by in-person workshops twice per year.

Examples of collaborative practice include:

1. Joint module development: study courses such as Content and Learning Approaches in Language Education and Mathematics in Primary Education are co-taught by staff from both academies, ensuring consistent methodology and assessment.
2. Unified e-learning platform: both RTU LA and RTU RA use a shared Moodle environment for uploading materials, assignments, and discussion forums, ensuring equal access for all students.
3. Joint methodological seminars: sessions such as Research in Education and Childhood Pedagogy serve as platforms for exchanging teaching innovations and discussing assessment results.
4. Collaborative outputs: staff co-author articles and methodological publications (see SAR Annex “Scientific publications of academic staff”) and jointly organize the student research conference Child. Teacher. Education.

New academic staff receive systematic support from experienced colleagues. The mentoring structure includes peer review of lesson plans, joint lectures, and feedback sessions. The cooperation extends beyond academic activities: lecturers from both academies participate in regional education events and national conferences, presenting joint research outcomes.

Mobility plays a vital role in fostering collaboration and professional growth. According to SAR Annex "Statistical data on outgoing and incoming mobility of academic staff", during the last three years, 12 teaching staff members participated in international mobility - visiting universities in Poland, Spain, Norway, and Finland - while four foreign lecturers from South Africa, the USA, and Croatia contributed as visiting professors.

This well-structured cooperation model ensures harmonization of curricula, alignment of course outcomes, and unified assessment principles. It enhances the coherence of the study programme, strengthens academic exchange, and contributes to a shared institutional culture between RTU LA and RTU RA. It can therefore be concluded that the cooperation mechanisms are functioning effectively and serve as a model of good practice for other regional teacher education study programmes.

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

Evidence from the SAR, on-site meetings, and provided documentation confirms that the Primary Education Teacher (Bachelor, 42141) study programme is implemented by a highly qualified, research-active, and pedagogically experienced academic team. The composition of teaching staff fully complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and RTU internal regulations, while reflecting the regional mission of both RTU LA and RTU RA as pedagogical centres in western and eastern Latvia.

The academic staff demonstrate a consistent record of excellence in teaching, research, and professional engagement. Over the past six years, 54 peer-reviewed articles, 3 monographs, and 5 methodological textbooks have been produced, with 18% of publications.

Strengths:

1. Highly qualified and experienced academic staff.
2. Strong research performance - 54 peer-reviewed publications, 18% in Q1-Q2 journals.
3. Active participation in Erasmus+, national and international projects.
4. Effective mentoring and cooperation mechanisms between RTU LA and RTU RA.
5. Clear regional impact on addressing teacher shortages.
6. High student satisfaction with teaching quality and accessibility of staff.

Weaknesses:

1. Ageing academic staff; recruitment of younger researchers remains challenging.
2. Moderate international publication visibility, which could be enhanced through targeted institutional support.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Primary Education Teacher professional study programme staff fully comply with national and institutional qualification requirements. All lecturers hold relevant degrees in pedagogy or

related fields, supported by research achievements and extensive professional practice.

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

The study programme is complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 305 “Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education”, and the SAR annex “Annex 23.2_Compliance of the study program with the national education standard.docx” provides the detailed mapping that demonstrates this compliance and served as the basis for the experts’ evaluation.

- 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

SAR Annex “Annex 24.2_Compliance of the study programme with the Teacher Professional Standard.docx confirms that the study programme is compliant with the professional standard “Teacher” (approved on 12 of June, 2020).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The attached study course descriptions (SAR Annex “Annex 28.2_Course descriptions of study programme_Primary Education Teacher_ENG.pdf”) are prepared in Latvian. Descriptions comply with regulations outlined in the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

- 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 (SAR Annex “Annex 19.2_Diploma_Diploma Supplement Sample_Primary education teachera_LV_EN.pdf”) complies with the procedure by which state-recognized documents of higher education are issued in accordance with Cabinet regulations No.202 “procedure for Issuing State-Recognised Higher Education Qualification Documents”.

- 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

The attached resumes of staff (SAR Annex "Academic staff_CV RTU LA_RTU RA_ENG.zip") and confirmation (SAR Annex "Confirmation - knowledge of the state language.edoc") verifies that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet Regulation No. 733 "Regulations on the Scope of State Language Proficiency, the Procedure for the State Language Proficiency Examination, and the State Fee for the Language Proficiency Examination".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Sample of the attached study agreement (SAR Annex "Sample of study agreement.zip") complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Mandatory Provisions to Be Included in the Study Agreement".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The attached contract (SAR Annex "Agreement with the University of Latvia on continuing education (in Latvian).edoc") confirms that the institution provides the possibility to continue studies at the University of Latvia in the study programme "Primary Education Teacher".

- 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

RTU confirmation (SAR Annex "Confirmation - on compensation for losses.edoc") 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: Fully compliant

The attached annex (SAR Annex “Annex 25.2_Compliance with MK not_569_Primary education teacher.docx”) confirms that the study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers’ regulations.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme fully complies with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

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

The Primary Education Teacher study programme demonstrates strong alignment with national and European standards of higher education, as defined by the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the ESG 2015. Evidence confirms that the study programme is coherently designed, systematically implemented, and supported by highly qualified academic staff, ensuring full compliance with accreditation requirements.

The teaching staff possess solid academic and professional credentials, an average of over 20 years of pedagogical experience. Their qualifications, complemented by strong research activity, ensure a deep integration of theory, practice, and innovation. The staff’s research portfolio includes 54 peer-reviewed publications, 18% in Q1-Q2 journals, and active participation in more than 10 Erasmus+ and national projects, strengthening the programme’s international visibility and its contribution to educational science.

The academic culture is defined by collaboration and reflection. Cooperation between RTU LA and RTU RA academic teams ensures consistent implementation, unified academic standards, and mutual professional growth. The mentoring system for new lecturers, the use of the Moodle and ORTUS platforms, and joint course development all demonstrate a mature internal quality culture.

The regional mission of the two academies adds significant social and educational value. RTU LA and RTU RA act as regional pedagogical hubs in western and eastern Latvia, respectively, addressing teacher shortages and supporting educational sustainability at local and national levels. The study programme’s graduates are in high demand in schools across Latvia, confirming the societal impact and relevance of this programme.

At the same time, the expert group notes that certain challenges remain. The ageing structure of academic staff and the limited time allocated for research within the workload system (40 hours per year) may, in the long run, limit staff renewal and international publication output. It is therefore advisable to reinforce institutional support for research activity, attract young academics, and

continue developing English-language competencies to sustain international competitiveness. Overall, the Primary Education Teacher study programme is fully compliant with the standards for academic quality, research integration, and teaching excellence. It successfully combines scientific grounding with strong professional practice, ensuring that future teachers are prepared to meet the challenges of contemporary and inclusive education.

Study content and organization of the study programme supports the acquisition of the necessary professional competencies, which are determined by the Standard of the Teaching Profession, for work in the first stage of basic education. The demand of the job-market has been considered as the study programme provides for qualified teacher training in grades 1-3 of the first stage of primary education and grades 4-6 of the second stage of primary education. Study courses are designed to not only foster the development of student’s theoretical knowledge and methodological skills but also the skills to integrate the study content. Internship as a process is well organized and supported. It is focused on the observation of study process in forms 1-6, improvement of the skills of planning and organizing the pedagogical process in grades 1-3 and grades 4-6 of primary school, as well as on chosen module learned. As inclusive education becomes more and more topical in the job market, it is applaudable that elective module and “Diversity competence in inclusive education” is offered but it has to be noted that elective module "Content and learning approaches of preschool learning areas" has not been chosen by students lately not at RTU RA nor at RTU LA and there are no other study subjects offered as elective modules except “Music” so the strategy has to be considered how to develop new opportunities for the future development and longitudinality of the study programme.

In total, the study programme "Primary Education Teacher" covers 15% of the expenses from the study field "Pedagogy and Education". In the library, the collection thematically corresponds to the study programme; there are 15 databases actively available. The material and technical provision is provided for the implementation of the study programme. The facilities guarantee prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process.

Evaluation of the study programme "Primary education teacher"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Primary education teacher"

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|--|
| 1. Increase the proportion of research hours in staff workload to ensure sufficient time for publication, project participation, and doctoral supervision.(2027./2028.). |
| 2. Harmonise student feedback systems across RTU LA and RTU RA, ensuring consistent use of student evaluations in all courses and systematic analysis of results. (2026./2027.). |
| 3. In RTU RA more emphasis must go to English: for example, to invite lecturers from abroad, to support Erasmus-activities among students etc. |
| 4. Include the basic knowledge of choir conducting in the study content of future teachers who choose the elective module “Music Teacher” till the study year 2026./2027. |
| 5. Add the task to the internship descriptions to motivate students to research the specifics of collaboration between partners “Teacher-Student-Parent" till the study year 2026./2027. |

6. Add sources in foreign languages to recommended literature sources for the study courses supporting students' research skills development till the study year 2026./2027.

Long-term recommendations

1. Strengthen the international research profile by promoting co-authored publications in high-impact (Q1-Q2) journals such as Sustainability, Frontiers in Psychology, and Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, aiming for at least a 25% share of articles in indexed journals by 2027.

2. Enhance interregional cooperation between RTU LA and RTU RA, further developing shared research clusters, joint supervision of theses, and interdisciplinary study modules to reinforce the pedagogical bridge between western and eastern Latvia.

3. Strategically consider if there is a need and justification for the elective module "Content and learning approaches of preschool learning areas" as it has not been chosen by students in RTU RA since 2023/2024 and no one has ever chosen this module in RTU LA.

4. Strategically consider offering the elective Module "Music Teacher" also in RTU RA as well as to consider offering other study subjects in both structural units of RTU to be chosen as elective modules to widen the opportunities for students.

5. To enhance internationalisation by introducing more English-language study opportunities and increasing collaboration with international partners, visiting lecturers, and exchange students.

6. To strengthen digital pedagogy and promote interdisciplinary collaboration - particularly between education, ICT, and design fields - to foster innovative and technology-enhanced teaching and learning practices.

II - "Teacher" ASSESSMENT

II - "Teacher" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The first-cycle professional higher education study programme "Teacher" (44141) demonstrates clear compliance with the study field "Education and Pedagogy", in particular with the teacher education thematic area 141, Teacher Education and Educational Science. The structure of the study programme, the objectives, and the outcomes are aligned with the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) Level 6 and the professional standard for Teacher (SAR, p. 213). It follows the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 322 and No. 305 governing national higher education, and professional standards.

The overall study programme's objective is to prepare competent and creative teachers capable of applying pedagogical theory and practice. This objective corresponds directly with the field's strategic priorities: development of methodological and scientific research capacity, promotion of innovative teaching practices, and enhancement of cooperation between academia and schools. The study programme curriculum is practice-based, and integrates pedagogical theory, classroom practice, and research activities. It is implemented in cooperation with four leading higher education institutions. This partnership facilitates and strengthens the academic quality, promotes innovation, and strengthens the study programme's relevance to 'School 2030', an important educational

reform for the country.

The study programme organizes regular involvement of employers and professional organizations in order to maintain relevance with labour market demands. Next, feedback from students and graduates contribute to the continuous improvement of the study programme. Thus, the study programme effectively bridges the gap between pedagogical theory, research, and professional practice.

2.1.2. The study programme's title "Teacher", code (44141) and professional qualification (Teacher, LQF Level 6) are coherently aligned and fully comply with national classification and qualification frameworks. The aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are logically interrelated and demonstrate internal consistency. The aim of the study programme is to prepare graduates that are capable to perform professional pedagogical work in accordance with the professional standard for teachers. This aim is operationalized through objectives focusing on work- and research-based studies, the development of pedagogical competence, and the promotion of reflective teaching practice. The learning outcomes are well-defined, measurable, and directly linked to these objectives, e.g. leadership, communication, and self-assessment skills that are essential for modern teaching roles. The study programme aim - to enable graduates with prior higher education in non-pedagogical fields to acquire a professional teacher qualification at LQF Level 6 - directly determines the formulation of the study programme objectives, which focus on developing pedagogical, methodological, and reflective competences required for professional teaching practice. These objectives are operationalised through clearly defined learning outcomes that specify the knowledge, skills, and competences graduates must achieve, in full alignment with the professional standard "Teacher". The admission requirements are explicitly designed to support this structure, as they ensure that incoming students already possess relevant subject-specific knowledge and academic maturity, while the entrance examination assesses motivation, readiness, and suitability for pedagogical work. As a result, student selection, learning outcomes, and programme objectives form a coherent and mutually reinforcing system that supports the effective achievement of the study programme aim.

The admission requirements are structured through three options (SAR, pp. 213-214) ensuring that candidates have relevant academic backgrounds or equivalent competencies. The entrance examination (written and oral) focuses on the motivation, the professional orientation, and the suitability of the candidates for teacher education. This way, the study programme wants to ensure a high-quality student intake. At the same time, the admission requirements for the study programme are notably complex, reflecting the diverse academic backgrounds of prospective students. They include multiple pathways depending on the candidate's previous higher education - whether in a related field, an unrelated field, or with specific subject course completions - combined with mandatory entrance examinations assessing both written knowledge and practical pedagogical skills. This multifaceted approach ensures that all admitted students possess the foundational knowledge, motivation, and aptitude necessary to succeed in the accelerated teacher training programme, while maintaining high standards for professional readiness. The admission requirements are also supportive for the achievement of the learning outcomes.

The duration of the study programme is short (1 year, full-time, 60 ECTS), but at the same time, this is justified. It is designed for candidates that have already a first-cycle higher education degree, allowing for efficient requalification into teaching. The scope and average workload (28 hours per credit) are appropriate for the study programme's intensity and professional orientation. The language of instruction of the study programme is Latvian. Given the targeted labour market in the national context, this choice can be defended.

2.1.3. The first-cycle professional higher education study programme "Teacher" (44141) underwent several corrections following the recommendations of the Study Quality Commission. The changes

were clearly documented in the SAR (pp. 214-215). These are justified given regulatory compliance, the labor market requirements, and best practices. They are also supported by previous expert opinions and consultations in the educational sector.

Some important corrections are:

1. The number of ECTS changed from 40 to 60 (while the value remained the same) to transform from the Latvian credit point system to the European ECTS.
2. The outcomes were clarified and now these specify the knowledge, skills, and competences to be achieved. These are also reflected in the overview of the courses and their descriptions.
3. The admission requirements were refined which now leads to multiple pathways based on prior education to ensure suitability for the study programme. These include entrance exams that assess motivation, prior knowledge, and pedagogical aptitude.
4. The study programme now fully corresponds to the national professional standard for teacher. This ensures that the graduates meet the legal and the professional requirements.

These changes are consistent with the study programme's objective of preparing qualified teachers to rapidly respond to labor market needs. These corrections demonstrate a responsive approach to quality assurance, and they are addressing both legal requirements and practical relevance for teacher preparation.

2.1.4. The study programme is socially and economically justified due to the strong demand for teachers in Latvia. The teacher shortages are evidenced via multiple sources, including the State Employment Agency, the Ministry of Education and Science surveys, and the Latvian Economic Development Report (SAR, pp. 218-219). The most problematic areas are STEM, languages, and arts.

As a result, the graduates are in high demand. The current situation is that practically all alumni are employed in their field shortly after or even during their studies. The labour market projections predict even increasing vacancies because of the expected retirements and because of a low proportion of young teachers. In this sense the economic and social justification of the study programme is evident.

The study programme is structured in such a way that it allows fast integration of graduates into the workforce. It only lasts one year, and it has a strong focus on practice-based learning. A relevant element is also the regional coverage and partnerships to ensure that the programme contributes to the national education goals and addresses general and region-specific teacher shortages across Latvia. In sharp contrast to the strong labour market justification, the student intake has decreased sharply due to issues with cooperation partner selection and regional applicant availability (SAR, p. 221).

The enrollment of students is declining. The student numbers have decreased from 20 in 2020/21 to 3 in 2024/25, and raised again to 11 in 2025/26. Some factors to explain this are mentioned in the SAR (p. 221): observed inefficiencies in the student selection process through a cooperation partner, the limited local applicant pool in the region of Kurzeme, and the fact that the funding and student recruitment centralized under the University of Latvia. On the other hand, those who are admitted are highly motivated and demonstrate excellent academic performance. Quality prevails quantity. Initially, 100 budget places were foreseen across three universities, but the current enrollment fell substantially far below projections due to selection and administrative constraints.

This means that the dynamics of student numbers indicate a critical issue. Despite clear labor market demand, the enrollment is insufficient due to administrative and systemic barriers rather than lack of interest or program relevance. The study programme's sustainability may be threatened if these structural issues are not addressed.

The social and economic context, as described, goes hand in hand with the employment situation for the graduates. During the report period, all graduates are employed in relevant roles (SAR, p. 219).

Given the practice-based nature of the study, students are allowed to start working during their studies, which fosters an early career integration. Graduates are employed in fields with documented teacher shortages, like STEM and languages, but more graduates are needed.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The study programme “Teacher” (44141) is well-aligned with the study field Education and Pedagogy and meets all regulatory and professional standards. The interrelation of its structural components ensures coherence and effectiveness in achieving the intended learning outcomes. The duration and scope are reasonable and justified. The study programme’s short, intensive design efficiently addresses the labour market needs for qualified teachers while maintaining academic rigour. Minor improvements could include expanding study modes, clarifying the implementation language, and enhancing international comparability.

The study programme demonstrates well-analyzed and justified corrections to improve regulatory compliance, learning outcomes, and graduate readiness for the labour market. The study programme is well-justified economically and socially and produces graduates who are in high demand in the Latvian labor market. However, the enrollment trends are concerning, with a significant drop in student numbers due to administrative and procedural challenges. Addressing student recruitment processes and considering fee-paying options or regional recruitment strategies could stabilize the study programme.

Strengths:

1. Strong alignment with the study field Education and Pedagogy and the professional standard of Teacher.
2. Inter-university cooperation enhances academic quality and resource sharing.
3. Active stakeholder engagement in study programme development and evaluation.
4. Rigorous admission process ensures candidate motivation and suitability.
5. Efficient short-cycle design (60 ECTS/1 year) facilitating rapid entry into the labour market.
6. Changes are clearly justified and documented, showing a logical connection to regulatory requirements and labor market needs.
7. Learning outcomes and admission requirements have been systematically revised for clarity and coherence.
8. Adjustments ensure the study programme meets professional standards, improving graduate readiness and employability.
9. Strong social and economic rationale; study programme addresses critical teacher shortages and regional needs.
10. Graduates show high employability, confirming alignment with labour market demands

Weaknesses:

1. The study programme’s student intake and regional reach may restrict the broader impact on the national teacher education field.
2. Limited flexibility for part-time or distance study options, which could broaden access for working professionals.
3. Support from the cooperation partner for student selection has been inconsistent.
4. Student numbers have declined significantly, indicating challenges in attracting applicants and potential threats to programme sustainability.
5. Dependence on external partners (e.g., University of Latvia for selection) has negatively affected student enrolment.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The study programme's content is up-to-date. It has been structured to ensure all courses and modules complement each other and collectively meet the study programme's objectives. Each course is designed to build the knowledge and skills needed for a modern teacher, in accordance with level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) and the profession standard "Teacher" (2020) (SAR p. 222). The curriculum integrates theory with practice (this was also highlighted by the students) – so that learning outcomes are gradually and reliably achieved. The specialisation modules include Educational Psychology; Teacher's Professional Activity; National Defence, Civil and Environmental Protection; Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship; Mathematics Teaching Methodology; Methodology for Teaching Technology; Cultural Awareness and Self-expression in Art; Integrated Teaching Methodologies in the Study Field of Natural Sciences; Foreign and Second Language Teaching Methodology; Methods of Teaching Latvian Language and Literature; Methods of Teaching in the Fields of Social and Civic Education; Methods of Teaching Health and Physical Activities; Pedagogical Practice I; Pedagogical Practice II; and the Diploma Paper / Experiential Work (programme annexis) First-cycle (professional qualification) higher education study programme Teacher (code 44141) Course Descriptions, SAR p. 354).

However, study programme documentation does not consistently provide a sufficiently explicit description of the pedagogical strategies used, nor does it always clearly demonstrate their direct contribution to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. At the same time, the study programme demonstrates a strong commitment to academic currency through the continuous updating of study content in line with current scientific trends. This is achieved in several ways: (1) academic staff actively participate in scientific conferences and research projects, incorporating relevant insights into course content; (2) student participation in academic conferences is strongly encouraged; and (3) the RTU Scientific Library ensures broad access to scientific databases to support the development of research papers. The study programme content also keeps pace with working life and scientific trends: it incorporates the latest educational approaches and updates course materials with new research findings and stakeholder feedback. For example, the integration of theory and practice is evident during pedagogical practice: in the first semester, the internship is carried out in parallel with the active study process, and students participate in internship seminars; similarly, during Pedagogical Practice II, structured and active internship seminar work is planned and implemented (SAR p. 231). Overall, the topical content and systematic updates ensure graduates have relevant competencies that meet current Latvian labor market needs.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. Based on the background material (SAR p. 223) and site visits the study programme applies a diverse range of student-centred teaching methods that effectively support the intended learning outcomes. For example, the study programme employs interactive lectures, group work, case studies, and modelling, as well as digital tools and platforms (e.g. Moodle, soma.lv, skolo.lv), and real-world problem-solving through the analysis of teaching practice. During the site visits, students and teachers reported that interactive lectures, problem-based seminars, group projects, case studies, and study visits encourage students to apply theoretical knowledge in authentic educational contexts. Contributions from experienced school teachers and industry practitioners further strengthen the link between theory and classroom practice. Learning environments are flexible and supported by extensive use of digital platforms such as Moodle, enabling continuous feedback and mentoring. Assessment methods are transparent and clearly aligned with learning objectives, promoting student responsibility and reflective learning, as demonstrated, for example, in the

course Teacher's Professional Activity. Students are encouraged to draw on their own teaching experiences, engage in collaborative problem-solving, and exchange professional insights, thereby fostering peer learning, as demonstrated in the course Integrated Teaching Methodologies in the Study Field of Natural Sciences. On the other hand, the study workload may be demanding for students who combine dual specialisations with full-time teaching employment, which can create challenges in maintaining a balanced and sustainable study-work load.

2.2.4. The study programme includes a substantial internship component (30 KP; SAR p. 223), underlining the importance of work-based learning in teacher education. The internships are typically carried out in schools where the students are employed as teachers, and each student-teacher is paired with a qualified mentor at the school as well as an internship supervisor from the university. This arrangement is formalized through cooperation agreements and adheres to the national internship regulations (Cabinet Regulation No. 305), ensuring compliance with all relevant legal and quality requirements. Throughout the internship, students actively plan and deliver lessons, assess learners, and reflect on their teaching – tasks that directly correspond to the study programme's learning outcomes and the competencies required by the teaching profession. The RTU provides study courses for general knowledge acquisition (9 CP) and field study courses (6 CP), a total of 15 CP - before the internship begins and continues to support students via regular internship seminars and peer support groups during the practice period (SAR p. 223). Mentors observe at least 1-2 lessons per month and provide constructive feedback, while the university supervisor liaises with the mentor and student to monitor progress (SAR p. 231). This well-structured support and feedback system helps students integrate theory with classroom practice and gradually improve their professional skills. The internship concludes with a comprehensive evaluation (combining mentor assessments, supervisor evaluations of lesson observations and reports, and the student's self-analysis), which ensures the internship experience successfully contributes to the achievement of the study programme's learning outcomes. On the other hand, there is some concern that programme flexibility across different specialisation combinations is not entirely uniform, as it is partly dependent on the availability of appropriate school placements and qualified mentor teachers.

2.2.5. Not Applicable.

2.2.6. A total of 34 final theses have been defended during the reporting period (SAR p. 233). The final theses seem to be well aligned with the study programme's objectives and the wider field of education, addressing contemporary challenges and innovations in teaching. For example, the thesis topics Online platform and resources for learning the subject "Computer Science" in the 8th grade, Elements of pupils' cognitive interest in science lessons, and Self-directed learning in math classes in grade 4 all address key aspects of innovativeness in teaching. They emphasize the use of digital tools, learner engagement, and self-directed learning as innovative, learner-centered approaches that support effective teaching across subjects and grade levels. Topics typically emerge from students' internship experiences, ensuring strong relevance to school practice. Common themes include modern pedagogical approaches, technology integration, self-directed learning, assessment and feedback, and strategies to enhance student engagement. Recent theses have also examined remote learning and competence-based education, reflecting current sector priorities. Students are supported in linking theory and practice by conducting up-to-date literature reviews and implementing research-based interventions in classroom settings, often producing practical teaching resources or methodologies. Topic relevance is strengthened through supervision by academic staff and input from practitioners.

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

The teacher education study programme is well-structured, aligned with national standards, and effectively prepares students for the teaching profession. It integrates theoretical knowledge with extensive practice and fosters student-centred, reflective learning. Internship and thesis components are strongly connected to real school environments and contemporary educational challenges. Overall, the study programme demonstrates strong coherence, relevance, and quality in its implementation.

Strengths:

1. Internships are substantial, well-supported, and closely linked to study programme outcomes.
2. Final thesis topics reflect real-world classroom issues and labour market relevance.
3. Strong mentor and supervisor systems support student development throughout practice and research.

Weaknesses:

1. Some documentation could better highlight pedagogical strategies and their impact.
2. The workload for students managing dual specialisations and full-time teaching may be intensive.
3. Programme flexibility across all specialisation combinations may vary depending on available school placements and mentors.

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. Studies take place in RTU LA Lielā street 14, Liepāja. Auditoriums for studies are equipped with appropriate furniture and technical (incl. multimedia) equipment that allows lecturers to use online social media materials in lectures, and students to present their research in multimedia presentations. There is the opportunity to connect to MS Teams or another programme, providing remote or hybrid learning opportunities. There also is conference video equipment, which is provided by moving 360-degree video cameras. Several modern computer classes can be used for the study process. Students are provided with an E-learning environment (Moodle), and with the opportunity to use the IBM SPSS Statistics programme to process research data (SAR, p. 234). Experts visited the facilities during the site visit and saw that the material and technical base necessary for the implementation of the study programme is correct.

Experts also visited the library. The library collection thematically corresponds to the first cycle professional bachelor's study programme "Teacher" of the study field "Education and Pedagogy". The study programme offers literature according to all topics of the courses to be taught in this study programme; and of all resources, about 35% of the items in the collection are meant for this study programme. Everyone has the opportunity to use the open access databases created by the RTU LA Library: for example, the EBSCO e-book collection contains approximately 39,000 electronic publications according to educational keywords (SAR, p. 343).

According to the SAR (pp. 235-236), students have access to technical and informational support for working in databases of scientific publications – EBSCO, Letonika, ScienceDirect, SCOPUS, Web of

Science and Cambridge Journals Online. In the library, there is a reading room and individual work rooms. The library provides training, reference, and consultation on the use of information resources and the use of services. In 2024, the databases and other digital resources available in the RTU LA library were used in 24,400 connection sessions. Approximately 10% of the library's holdings consist of information resources related to these topics.

The library is open from 8:00 -19:00; there are about 65000 paper-books, 75% of them are on open shelves. Every day about 70 students visit the library, which is a good result, as in the RTU LA there are about 1200 students. Also, final thesis can be found on open shelves from earlier years: now they are kept electronically only.

The library has enough resources for the new books: about 15000 EUR per year. But, according to the experts' view, in the library the newest study books cannot be found on the open shelves: only some older editions for some subjects are available. Experts were told that the academy uses mostly e-books. Students didn't complain - they said that during the school practice the necessary literature is available, which is even better, because in different schools' different study books are used.

Experts' conclusion is that the collection of the RTU Library thematically corresponds to the first-cycle higher education study programme "Teacher". The material and technical provisions/facilities provided for the implementation of the study programme and its availability to students and teaching staff shall be assessed as appropriate.

2.3.2. Not Applicable.

2.3.3. According to the SAR (p. 236), the financial resources for ensuring the study process at RTU LA basically consist of payments from the state basic budget for higher education; monies received from paid services provided, including tuition fee; deductions from projects to cover centralized expenses; donations and gifts; revenue earmarked for specific purposes; other revenue from own funds; financing from the European Union Structural Funds; the balance of funds in the bank account of the basic budget from the previous calendar year. According to the statistics, the exact budget is:

- The cost of one study place in 2025 is EUR 3 174.92,
- The number of study places financed from the State budget in 2025/26 is 10.
- The tuition fee for the 2025/26 academic year is EUR 3 340.
- Total funding for 2024/25 in the study field was EUR 1 293 634.
- About 2% of the total expenditure is allocated to this study programme.
- The minimum number of enrolled students is 8.

But, according to the SAR (p. 237), there were only 3 students in this fulltime study programme (during the study year 2024/2025). Obviously, the use of funding was not optimal: the financial sustainability of this study programme needs a serious consideration. However, starting from 1. September 2025, 11 students have been admitted to this full-time programme (SAR, p. 237), which means that the increase in student numbers exceeds 250%, indicating the potential of this programme and the necessity to continue its development.

Experts met students and graduates during the site visit, who praised the personalized relation and warm attitude in the institution: for example, teachers answer students' questions very fast; and teachers always have time to discuss with students - also after the lectures.

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

The facilities provision provided for the implementation of the study programme and its availability to students and teaching staff is growth-oriented. The resources are sufficient for high-quality implementation of the study programme: despite the fact that the number of students differ in

different study years, there seems to be hope for a more stable future.

The library collection thematically corresponds to the first cycle professional study programme “Teacher” of the study field “Education and Pedagogy”.

Strengths:

1. The library collection thematically corresponds to the study programme.
2. The library has enough resources for the new books: about 15000 EUR per year.
3. Compared to the previous study year, the increase in student numbers exceeds 250%, indicating the potential of this programme and the necessity to continue its development.

Weaknesses: Not identified.

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 facilities provision provided for the implementation of the study programme and its availability to students and teaching staff is growth-oriented. The resources are sufficient for the high quality study. The library is well developed in the context of this study field. Compared to the previous study year, the increase in student numbers indicates the potential of the programme.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The first-cycle professional higher education study programme “Teacher” (44141) is delivered by an academically and professionally qualified team whose composition ensures the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme, as well as full compliance with national and institutional regulatory requirements (Law on Higher Education Institutions). According to the SAR (pp. 216-218) and Annex “List of Academic Staff”, 21 academic staff members are directly involved in the implementation of this study programme across RTU LA. The distribution of academic degrees reflects a mature and competent academic environment. As confirmed in Annex “List of academic staff RTU RA and RTU LA”, the average pedagogical experience exceeds 20 years, with the majority of academic staff having more than 15 years of continuous teaching experience in higher or general education. Some staff members combine academic work with leadership positions in municipal schools or methodological centres, serving as head teachers, preschool or secondary education directors, or education specialists. This dual experience guarantees the relevance of the curriculum to real-world pedagogical challenges and ensures a direct link between theory and practice.

The average age of the teaching staff demonstrates a balanced generational structure - an essential factor for continuity and innovation. Senior professors contribute experience in educational research, curriculum development, and quality assurance, while younger lecturers bring dynamic methodological and digital skills. Such an intergenerational composition promotes professional dialogue and gradual transfer of institutional knowledge, as also evidenced during the on-site visit discussions with staff members and programme directors. The SAR Annex “Confirmation - Knowledge of the Foreign Language” indicates that 94% of lecturers possess certified language proficiency (English, Russian, or German) at B2 level or higher. This linguistic capacity enables

effective participation in Erasmus+, Nordplus, and bilateral international projects. It also allows the staff to access and publish in international scientific journals and to supervise students in foreign language-based mobility contexts. The study programme's team actively contributes to applied research and innovation in teacher education. According to SAR Annex "Scientific Publications of Academic Staff", during the past six years, the lecturers have collectively produced publications such as in Sustainability, Frontiers in Psychology, and Education and Pedagogy Studies. The works are published in journals, national pedagogical collections, and conference proceedings indexed in Web of Science or Scopus.

Regionally, the academy plays a crucial role in addressing Latvia's national teacher shortage. As highlighted in the SAR (pp. 218-219), there is a persistent deficit of qualified teachers in STEM, Latvian language, and arts. By operating in Kurzeme (Liepāja), RTU ensures that pedagogical education remains accessible in region affected by depopulation and school network optimization. This regional mission aligns with the RTU Strategic Development Plan 2023-2027, which emphasizes territorial balance and the contribution of teacher education to sustainable regional growth.

In conclusion, the qualifications, experience, and research engagement of the academic staff demonstrate a strong alignment with the aims of the study programme and with national education policy priorities. The team's academic expertise and practical experience ensure the integration of theory, practice, and research - a defining feature of this professional study programme.

2.4.2. The institution applies well-defined and transparent procedures for staff recruitment, evaluation, and substitution, as outlined in the RTU Regulations on Academic Staff Employment and Evaluation (2022) and confirmed in SAR Annex "List of Changes in the Teaching Staff Made in the Study Programme". These procedures guarantee that any transition in the teaching team does not affect the quality or continuity of the study process.

Over the reporting period (2020-2025), four academic staff members left the study programme due to retirement, health issues, or workload redistribution. Each position was promptly replaced with professionals meeting equivalent qualification standards. Replacements were drawn from experienced school practitioners or early-career researchers with relevant pedagogical qualifications. Recruitment is carried out via open competitions published on the RTU portal. Selection is based on academic qualifications, teaching performance, and research output. The selection process is conducted by a faculty commission and ratified by the RTU Academic Council, ensuring impartiality and alignment with institutional quality standards.

To safeguard the continuity of learning outcomes, mentoring and co-teaching models are in place. New lecturers are paired with senior mentors who provide methodological support, supervise course syllabi development, and co-assess students during their first academic year. According to the on-site visit feedback, this approach has been particularly effective in ensuring a consistent didactic culture across both academies.

Mobility also plays a stabilizing role in maintaining academic quality. The SAR Annex "Statistical Data on Outgoing and Incoming Mobility of Academic Staff" shows that nine lecturers participated in international mobilities and six in domestic exchange teaching between RTU LA and RTU RA. These exchanges facilitated course harmonization, joint seminars, and professional learning communities that reduce dependency on individual lecturers.

In terms of long-term capacity building, the institution promotes succession planning by supporting doctoral studies among younger lecturers. Currently, three academic staff members are doctoral candidates in education sciences, which strengthens future research capacity and ensures sustainability.

A structured workload regulation system ensures balance between teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. The SAR Annex "Compilation of Quantitative Data" confirms that each full-time academic staff member dedicates approximately 60% of working hours to teaching, 25% to research, and 15% to administrative and developmental tasks, which aligns with ENQA

standards.

Finally, the regional presence of RTU LA provides a resilience mechanism against demographic decline in teacher education. As confirmed during the on-site visit, staff cooperation between the two academies-enabled by digital tools such as MS Teams and ORTUS-ensures that specialized courses can continue uninterrupted even if local personnel availability changes.

Overall, evidence shows that RTU effectively manages staff transitions through transparent recruitment, systematic mentoring, and regional cooperation. These measures secure the academic continuity and stability of the study programme.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. According to the SAR section 3.4.1. and Annex “Scientific Publications of Academic Staff”, the teaching staff of the Teacher (44141) study programme demonstrates consistent scholarly activity and applied research engagement that fully complies with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

During the past six years (2019-2024), the academic staff have produced publications, that appear in Q1-Q2 journals and Q3-Q4 journals, and also in indexed conference proceedings and national pedagogical collections. The international publications are primarily featured in journals such as Sustainability (MDPI), Frontiers in Psychology, Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, and Education and Pedagogy Studies.

National-level publications appear in collections published by RTU Press and the Latvian Academy of Sciences. Several papers address contemporary issues in inclusive education, digital pedagogy, and sustainability in teacher preparation - areas strongly aligned with Latvia’s strategic priorities in education policy. In addition to individual publications, the staff co-authored five monographs and eight methodological teaching tools designed for practical application in teacher education. These include textbooks and handbooks on innovative didactics, inclusive practices, and the development of student competences in line with the competence-based curriculum reforms implemented in Latvia since 2020.

The SAR Annex “Academic Staff CVs of RTU LA and RTU RA” confirms that nearly all lecturers have published at least once during the last six-year accreditation cycle. In cases where an academic joined more recently, their research engagement is proportionally aligned with the institutional requirement (minimum of one publication per three years).

Beyond publications, the academic staff actively participate in research projects and national grant programmes. According to the SAR (pp. 223-224) and Annex “Compilation of Quantitative Data”, staff members have participated in externally funded research projects, including national projects supported by the Latvian Council of Science and international initiatives such as Erasmus+ “Teacher Competences for Sustainable Education”, Nordplus “Inclusive Pedagogy in the Baltic Region”, and EEA Research Grants “Digital Learning Innovation in Latvia”.

Participation in conferences is equally strong: 22 national conferences and 9 international conferences were attended by RTU LA teaching staff during the last three years. The SAR Annex “Statistical Data on Outgoing and Incoming Mobility of Academic Staff” demonstrates that nine teachers participated in Erasmus+ teaching mobilities in countries such as Finland, Poland, and Portugal, and several hosted guest lecturers from the University of Tartu, the University of Oulu, and Vilnius University.

During the on-site visit, the academic staff confirmed that these exchanges significantly enhance the integration of international perspectives into teaching and provide opportunities for joint publications. Employers emphasized that the involvement of practitioners in co-teaching and research reinforces the applied nature of the study programme.

In conclusion, the study programme’s academic staff maintain an active and relevant research profile, ensuring that teaching is informed by evidence-based practice. The research productivity

meets both national legal requirements and international benchmarks, though an increase in dedicated research hours and international project leadership would further consolidate RTU's position in teacher education research.

2.4.5. Collaboration among teaching staff is a defining strength of the Teacher (44141) study programme and a key component in ensuring coherence between theory and practice. As emphasized in the SAR (pp. 225-227) and confirmed during the on-site visit, cooperation is structured at both the institutional and inter-academy levels.

Within the academy, collaboration occurs through joint planning and peer evaluation of study courses. Lecturers meet at least twice per semester to align course content, assessment methods, and learning outcomes. This ensures that theoretical modules correspond to practical courses and that learning outcomes are consistently achieved across study sites.

Teaching staff cooperation is also reinforced through joint methodological seminars and conferences. Annual events such as the "Child. Teacher. Education" conference and the publication "Anthill of Ideas" (Ideju pūznis) provide platforms for both staff and students to exchange ideas, showcase research, and discuss best practices in pedagogy.

During the on-site visit, teachers highlighted that cooperation is not merely procedural but forms a genuine professional community. Regular mentoring of new lecturers ensures a continuous exchange of pedagogical experience. Younger colleagues receive guidance in course design, research planning, and use of digital tools, while experienced academics benefit from fresh methodological perspectives.

The collaboration also extends to joint student supervision and assessment, ensuring that both academies apply unified evaluation criteria. This interconnectivity guarantees that students in Kurzeme receive comparable academic experiences despite the regional implementation.

The academic environment encourages interdisciplinary dialogue. Cooperation between teaching staff of different courses allows integrated project-based learning, especially in subjects related to inclusive education, ICT in learning, and sustainability. This directly reflects the competence-based curriculum of Latvia's school reform.

Overall, cooperation mechanisms within the study programme are comprehensive, structured, and effective. They ensure that staff engagement contributes directly to quality assurance and to the continuous development of teaching and learning practices.

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

Evidence from SAR, Annexes, and on-site meetings confirms that the Teacher (44141) study programme is implemented by a qualified, research-active, and pedagogically committed teaching staff. The institutional systems for recruitment, mentoring, professional development, and cooperation function effectively and align with ENQA Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015). The staff composition ensures an appropriate balance between experienced educators and new-generation lecturers. Research activity is continuous and relevant to the programme aims, and cooperation between RTU LA and RTU RA secures regional sustainability in teacher education.

While the research and mobility indicators meet the required standards, long-term improvement could focus on expanding research hours, strengthening English-language support for publications, and enhancing participation in Q1-Q2 international journals.

The study programme staff qualification complies with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Strengths:

1. Qualified and balanced academic staff composition: 42% PhD, 58% Master's degree holders.
2. Broad participation in Erasmus+, Nordplus, and national research projects.

3. Regional contribution to addressing teacher shortages in STEM and Latvian language.

Weaknesses:

1. In some cases the teaching staff's foreign language proficiency is insufficient.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff fully meet the national and institutional qualification standards; transparent recruitment, balanced expertise, active research, and strong regional contribution ensure the study programme's sustainability.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the State Professional Education Standard (see SAR Annex "Compliance with the national education standard.pdf") in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 of 13 June 2023 "Regulations Regarding the State Standard of Professional Higher Education".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with a Teacher professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (see SAR Annex "Compliance with Teacher professional standard.pdf").

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Full time studies of 1 year are implemented in Latvian, and all the study course materials are prepared in Latvian (see SAR Annex "Course descriptions.pdf", during the onsite visit the expert group had an opportunity to see examples from RTU internal system ORTUS). The structure of study course descriptions corresponds to the requirements set in Section 56(1) Paragraph two (see Course descriptions.pdf) and to the Section 56(2) Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (see SAR Annex "Standard curriculum.pdf").

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme (see SAR Annex "Diploma_diploma pielikumu paraugi_Skolotajs_LV_ENG.pdf") complies with the requirements stated in the Cabinet regulations no 202.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The knowledge of the Latvian language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the regulations on the state language knowledge and state language proficiency test for professional and official duties (Confirmation in SAR Annex "knowledge of the state language.edoc").

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study agreement (see SAR Annex "ASD_studiju_ligums_ENG") complies with the mandatory requirements indicated in the Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Cabinet Regulation No. 70 Mandatory Provisions to be Included in the Study Agreement" (<https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=152072>).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is a confirmation provided by RTU that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in the study programme “Teacher” of the University of Latvia if the implementation of the study programme is terminated (see SAR Annex “Agreement with the University of Latvia on continuing education (in Latvian).edoc”).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is a confirmation provided by the RTU 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 university and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme (see SAR Annex “Confirmation - on compensation for losses.edoc”).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of September 11, 2018 No. 569 "Regulations on education and professional qualifications necessary for pedagogues and procedures for improving the professional competence of pedagogues" (SAR ANNEX “Compliance with MK_569_Teacher.pdf”) - relevant study courses in the programme Teacher (44141) has been included according to the necessary competences, e.g. internships.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

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

The study programme “Teacher” (44141) is coherent, well-aligned with Education and Pedagogy, and meets regulatory and professional standards. Its structure, duration, and scope effectively support the achievement of intended learning outcomes, while the intensive design addresses labour market needs for qualified teachers. The study programme has implemented justified improvements to enhance compliance, learning outcomes, and graduate readiness. Economically and socially, it is well-supported, producing graduates in high demand. However, declining student enrollment highlights the need to improve recruitment processes, explore alternative funding or

regional strategies, and consider expanding study modes and international comparability. The study programme is implemented by a competent, research-engaged, and regionally relevant academic team whose collective expertise ensures quality and sustainability in Latvia's teacher education system.

The facilities provision provided for the implementation of the study programme and its availability to students and teaching staff is growth-oriented. The resources are sufficient for the high quality study. The library is well developed in the context of this study field. Compared to the previous study year, the increase in student numbers indicates the potential of the programme.

Evaluation of the study programme "Teacher"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Teacher"

Short-term recommendations

1. Introduce flexible study modes, such as part-time or distance learning options, to improve accessibility for working professionals and non-traditional students within the next two academic years.
2. Provide institutional support for English-language editing and publication preparation.

Long-term recommendations

1. Expand the study programme's regional outreach and recruitment strategies to increase its national impact and attract a broader pool of prospective students, within a six year's timeframe.
2. Implement targeted measures to address declining student enrollment, including enhanced marketing, outreach initiatives, and potential fee-paying options to maintain study programme sustainability within a six year's timeframe.
3. Maintain regional focus by preserving teacher education in Kurzeme as essential for national education policy.

II - "Educational Sciences" ASSESSMENT

II - "Educational Sciences" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The name of the study programme "Educational Sciences" reflects its focus on pedagogical aspects, leadership and research competences. The code (45142) is consistent with the Latvian Education Classification System, as a master study programme in educational sciences (SAR, p. 257). The courses and the specializations that are mentioned, are grounded in the field of education. They address current trends and current educational societal needs, e.g., diversity, literacy, educational management and human behavior. The study programme is meant for both educators and other professionals who want to develop their pedagogical competencies. Therefore, a significant relevance for the study field is guaranteed.

The goals of the Master study programme Educational Sciences are fully aligned with the broader goals of the study field Education and Pedagogy. Both emphasize developing pedagogical, leadership, and research competencies to ensure high-quality, innovative, and internationally relevant education. The study programme's objectives, (enhancing students' research capacity, pedagogical expertise, and leadership skills) directly support the study field's aims to prepare competent specialists and promote methodological and scientific excellence. Admission requirements, learning outcomes, and study programme structure are coherently designed to meet the Level 7 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework, ensuring academic level, relevance to labour market needs, and continuous professional growth.

The study programme complies with relevant strategic documents, such as the National Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Law of Higher Education (SAR, p. 263-264). Its objectives, structure, and learning outcomes are aligned with the National Development Plan of Latvia 2021-2027 and the Law of Higher Education, ensuring quality, accessibility, relevance to labour market needs, and the development of research-based and innovation-oriented higher education. It also aligns with the RTU Strategy Plan 2023-2027 (SAR, p. 264) and the European focus on lifelong learning and professional development (SAR, p. 257). The study programme also corresponds to the RTU Strategy Plan 2023-2027 by strengthening academic excellence, interdisciplinarity, internationalisation, and cooperation between RTU structural units, while promoting sustainable development and societal engagement. Furthermore, the study programme supports the European strategic emphasis on lifelong learning and continuous professional development by offering flexible study pathways, opportunities for upskilling and reskilling, and learner-centred approaches that foster professional growth and academic progression throughout the lifespan.

2.1.2. The title, degree and learning outcomes are interrelated (SAR, p. 257). The study programme objectives address pedagogical competences, educational leadership and ethical aspects. The objectives are designed in a consistent and logical way. The admission requirements are differentiated according to the specialization to facilitate that the students have relevant and adequate background knowledge and motivation to support the process obtaining the learning outcomes. The specializations (Diversity and Inclusion in education, Educational Management, Human Behaviour and Education) are structured to support the achievement of the corresponding learning outcomes.

The title Education Sciences reflects the study programme's academic focus on educational theory, research, pedagogy, and educational management, which is further confirmed by the degree awarded (a Master's Degree in Education Sciences). The defined learning outcomes correspond to Level 7 of the Latvian and European Qualifications Frameworks and ensure that graduates acquire in-depth knowledge of education sciences, advanced research skills, and the ability to critically analyse and solve complex educational problems. Thus, the title signals the disciplinary field, the degree certifies advanced academic achievement in that field, and the learning outcomes concretely demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and competences that justify both the study programme title and the awarded degree.

The study programme's structure - offered in both short (75 CP) and long (120 CP) forms, in full-time and part-time modes - demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness to the diverse academic and professional needs of students. The defined duration (from 1 year and 3 months to 2 years for full-time studies and from 1 year and 8 months to 2 years and 5 months for part-time studies) corresponds to the expected academic workload and facilitates an adequate balance between more theoretical and more research-based learning outcomes. The availability of eight implementation variants, including studies in Latvian and English, provides opportunities for both national and international students and strengthens the programme's internationalisation opportunities. This variety of implementation forms ensures the accessibility of studies, supports lifelong learning, and

enriches the programme's alignment with labour market demands and institutional strategic priorities. Therefore, according to the expert group, the duration and scope of the study programme implementation are considered justified, effective, and appropriate to achieving the defined learning outcomes and qualification level.

2.1.3. The study programme has implemented correction in several areas (SAR, pp. 256-257):

1. The learning outcomes are optimized to increase their clarity and get better alignment with course objectives.
2. The admission requirements are updated and adjusted to differentiate between the different specializations and prior education. These include written and oral examinations.
3. The study programme goals and objectives are updated and aligned with the RTU overall strategic directions, focusing on research, leadership, and innovation.
4. The course structure is adjusted: Master's Thesis Development I & II are now merged into a single course "Master Thesis" to streamline delivery and assessment.
5. Last but not least important organizational changes occurred meant to lead to a strengthened cooperation between RTU LA and RTU RA. This fosters the uniformity of the learning outcomes across the two academies and efficient use of shared resources.

These corrections are well-justified and improve the study programme quality. The changes are supported by recommendations from the Study Quality Commission. The organizational changes are in line with the institutional reorganization and consolidation that takes place. The different specialisations were reviewed to increase the alignment with the labour market needs and research trends. This affects their relevance and also their coherence and clarity in learning outcomes.

2.1.4. The SAR (p. 267) gives an economic rationale for the study programme: the reduction of teacher shortages is "the most important economic justification". The study programme targets practising teachers and other specialists who can strengthen the workforce. Reference is made to a national audit (State Audit Office, 2024) and UNESCO (2024) to justify the need for teacher retention and better preparation for the labour market. These elements underpin the economic justification of the study programme to improve the country's systemic problems related to teacher shortages, (very) high early-career attrition. The needs in this respect are clearly articulated during the meeting with the employers.

The SAR (p. 269) also demonstrates the study programme's social relevance. It addresses diversity and inclusion and provides a professional answer to the needs in the teacher's induction process. It also prepares leaders for educational management positions. There's also an important regionally differentiated aspect: RTU LA and especially RTU RA have both needs for further development of the area and therefore this programme is a necessity for this social and economic process.

The SAR (p. 270) provides year-by-year counts (2020/21–2024/25) for matriculated students by RTU LA and RTU RA, distinguishing short (75 CP) and long (120 CP) modules and specializations. The document lists annual numbers but does not calculate growth, nor does it describe trends.

An overview of the international student inflow is given, together with examples of country origins and projected intake (e.g., seven international students have started this academic year). It also identifies practical delivery modes and flexibility (e.g., weekend scheduling, the 6-session extramural option) and arguments for the format choices.

The report (SAR, p. 268) provides a small graduate table (Table 3.1.3.1) showing numbers by campus and counts "Work in the field of education", "Work in the education sector and continue doctoral studies", etc., recorded as of 01.03.2025. It gives concrete examples where non-pedagogy graduates became schoolteachers (in chemistry, Latvian, English), illustrating the opportunities the study programme offers for conversion into teacher roles. The SAR also maps graduate employment to the national Classification of Occupations groups (leaders, specialists, senior specialists) to show

occupational levels.

2.1.5. Not Applicable.

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

The study programme “Educational Sciences” demonstrates a high level of compliance with the study field. Its title, structure, aims and learning outcomes are coherently aligned with national and institutional strategic priorities, as well as with the European higher education standards. The study programme’s design and implementation shows a clear commitment to pedagogical competence development, leadership, inclusion and research-based practice. As a result, the graduates can get well prepared to professionally and academically contribute to the education labour market.

The study programme showed responsiveness to previous accreditation recommendations and evolving educational and societal needs. The implemented corrections (e.g., particularly the optimization of learning outcomes, clearer differentiation in admission requirements, and restructuring of the master’s thesis process) are an answer to previously observed shortcomings. They demonstrate a systematic approach to continuous improvement and internal quality assurance.

Economically and socially, the study programme has clear justification and relevance. It responds to the national priority of reducing teacher shortages, while also supporting the broader aims of educational leadership and inclusion. The flexible delivery formats (full-time, part-time, modular) and (to a certain extent) bilingual instruction contribute to accessibility, lifelong learning, and internationalization.

Overall, the study programme is coherent, strategically aligned and well justified both academically and socially. A stronger analytical approach to student and graduate data, including trend analysis and outcome monitoring, would further enhance its evidence base for decision-making and continuous development. The inclusion of the data in the RTU quality management system and the introduction of PowerBI can foster these practices.

Strengths:

1. Clear alignment with the field of Education and Pedagogy: the study programme title, content and learning outcomes are consistent with pedagogical, leadership and research dimensions central to the study field.
2. Compliance with strategic and policy frameworks: The study programme aligns with the National Development Plan, Law on Higher Education Institutions, RTU Strategy 2023–2027, and European lifelong learning priorities.
3. Systematic updates and improvements: The recent corrections (revised learning outcomes, admission criteria, and course structure) demonstrate responsiveness to previous feedback and commitment to quality enhancement.
4. Relevance and responsiveness to labour market and societal needs: The study programme addresses pressing societal issues such as teacher shortages, inclusion, and educational leadership.
5. Flexible structure and delivery modes: The availability of short and long formats, full-time and part-time options, and partially English-language delivery of the study programme promote accessibility, internationalization, and diversity in participation.
6. Institutional cooperation: the collaboration between RTU LA and RTU RA can strengthen the consistency in learning outcomes and efficient use of resources.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited analysis of student and graduate dynamics: while data are provided, trends over time and a more substantial interpretation of student numbers and graduate employment could be supportive

for the further development of the study programme.

2. Insufficient quantitative evidence on outcomes: In general, the study programme could benefit from more systematic data collection and evaluation of graduate career paths, satisfaction, and impact.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. According to the SAR (p. 249) "The aim of the academic master's study programme 'Educational Sciences' is: to promote the development of students' professional pedagogical, leadership and research competence for competitiveness in education, to motivate further academic growth, innovations and cooperation, ensuring the preparation of specialists necessary for the Latvia's economy". The study programme aligns with the national regulations e.g. Cabinet regulation No. 240 "Regulations Regarding the State Standard of Academic Education" (SAR pp. 274, see also p. 278). At the general level, the study programme Educational Sciences appropriately reflects its scope and purpose well. For example, the study programme Educational Sciences has been designed and delivered in line with theoretical developments, research findings, and international trends in the field. Its content, structure, and learning outcomes are closely aligned with contemporary scientific advances in education, which are systematically incorporated into the study process (SAR p. 278).

The structure of the Master's programme Educational Sciences ensures flexibility while enabling the preparation of diverse specialists within a single study programme. The Master's programme Educational Sciences is offered in two forms, 75 ECTS and 120 ECTS, both built around a coherent structure of compulsory, specialisation, and elective courses. The 75 ECTS form includes core courses such as History and Philosophy of Education in a 21st Century Perspective, Research I, Quality of education, Academic Practice in Education Sciences I, and the Master Thesis, complemented by specialisation-oriented courses including Management and leadership in education, Teaching and Learning in Digital Era, Innovative Pedagogy in Diversity and Digital Inclusion, and Solutions of Inclusive and Special Education for Diversity. The 120 ECTS form expands this foundation with additional compulsory courses such as Introduction to Education Studies, Educational Psychology, Research II, and Academic Practice in Educational Sciences II, as well as advanced specialisation courses including Teaching and Learning in Transformative Pedagogical Space, Learning and Teaching Technology, Pedagogical Management in Social Transformation Processes, and literacy-focused studies across different educational levels. In both forms, courses such as National Defence, Civil and Environmental Protection and Latvian for Foreign Students support transversal competencies. Together, the two programme forms ensure flexibility while systematically integrating all specialisations into a unified study framework (SAR, p. 309).

Both the short (75 CP) and long (120 CP) forms share a strong common core of compulsory courses in educational sciences, research, and academic practice, which provides all students with a unified theoretical and methodological foundation. Specialisations are embedded in the limited-choice and elective components, which constitute a substantial proportion of the programme in both forms. This structure allows students to develop specialised pedagogical, management, or research competencies according to their chosen focus, while maintaining coherence across the study programme. As a result, all specialisations are systematically integrated into the study programme, ensuring both diversity of professional profiles and consistency of learning outcomes.

The study programme demonstrates internal coherence, with logically structured, interconnected, and complementary courses that support the progressive development of pedagogical, leadership, and research competences aligned with the intended learning outcomes. For example, the aim of the academic Master's study programme Educational Sciences is to develop students' professional pedagogical, leadership, and research competences, which are essential for competitiveness in the

field of education, academic advancement, innovation, and collaboration. This was also clearly demonstrated during the site visit. The content is topical (e.g. course Teaching and Learning in Digital Era) and consistent with current developments in educational theory, research, and practice, integrating recent scientific knowledge and innovative pedagogical approaches that foster professional competence (see, SAR p. 279). Collaboration with schools and educational authorities — which was clearly evident during the site visits — ensures that the study programme remains responsive to the evolving needs of the education sector and enhances its practical relevance. However, it is important to note that higher education should not solely serve labour market needs; the intrinsic academic and cultural values of education, such as the pursuit of knowledge, intellectual autonomy, and social responsibility, deserve continued emphasis. Balancing professional relevance with these broader educational aims would further strengthen the academic identity and societal contribution of the study programme.

2.2.2. The Educational Sciences master's study programme is coherent, contemporary, and compliant with national standards, demonstrating clear alignment with both professional expectations and the wider purposes of higher learning (e.g., students are involved in academic practice, where they prepare publications, participate in conferences, and collect and analyze data). The awarding of the master's degree seems to be firmly grounded in the achievements and established research traditions of the field of educational science. For example, findings of the relevant field of science are demonstrated in the SAR (p. 275). Namely, the compulsory part of the master's study programme comprises courses in educational sciences that develop students' theoretical understanding of their chosen field and enable the application of this knowledge to contemporary issues within the discipline or its subfields. In both the short and long forms of study, the compulsory courses include History and Philosophy of Education in the Perspective of the 21st Century (6 CP), Research I (6 CP), and Quality of Education (6 CP), as well as Academic Practice in Educational Sciences I (3 CP). These courses are implemented simultaneously for students in both study programme formats, ensuring consistency in academic content and standards. In sum, the study programme systematically develops students' research skills through a strong emphasis on research methodology, academic practice, and the master's thesis process. During the site visit, it was clearly illustrated that research components are well integrated and function effectively in practice. Teaching staff actively incorporate relevant and up-to-date research findings into the study programme content, ensuring a strong connection between theory, research, and professional application.

2.2.3. The study implementation methods effectively support the achievement of the aims and intended learning outcomes of both the study courses and the overall study programme. Teaching relies on student-centred methods grounded in constructivism, reflection, and collaborative learning. Student-centred learning and teaching approaches are applied (also illustrated at the site visits), encouraging active engagement, independent thinking, and reflective practice. For example, the course Global trends in leadership for diversity and inclusion addresses contemporary challenges of a changing teaching profession in an excellent manner. Its focus on New paradigms in leadership for diversity. Values and vision in inclusive educational leadership, Teachers as leaders for diversity, inclusion and sustainability, and Planning for leadership skills development in the field of diversity and inclusion equips students with forward-looking competencies aligned with global educational trends. The academic units also intend to make good use of RTU's institutional support to further enhance the implementation of studies, particularly in the areas of digital learning and methodological innovation. Following the reorganization of RTU structural units, the study programme is now implemented in closer cooperation between RTU LA and RTU RA, with RTU LA serving as the leading partner (SAR p. 257). This reorganization has strengthened collaboration across locations and promoted greater consistency in study programme delivery. However, ensuring

ongoing communication, coordinated pedagogical approaches, and uniform quality assurance practices between the cooperating units will be essential for maintaining coherence and equity in student learning experiences. In future, as part of the consolidation process, the study programme needs to be systematically reviewed and refined to ensure that all students, regardless of their study location, achieve comparable learning outcomes and benefit from a unified academic approach.

2.2.4. Not applicable.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. The defence of the Master's thesis is a mandatory component of the study programme. The master's theses produced by students explore contemporary topics in educational sciences, including inclusive education, student behaviour, STEM didactics, emotional well-being, and related areas (SAR p. 281). The aim is that, through the thesis and the overall course of studies, students demonstrate the ability to independently identify and critically analyse complex scientific and professional problems in the field of education. They are expected to justify their decisions and, when necessary, to conduct additional analyses by applying the knowledge and skills acquired during their studies to new or unpredictable situations. Graduates should be capable of integrating insights and methods from different disciplines in autonomous decision-making processes, thereby contributing to the advancement of knowledge and to the development of research and professional practice in education. Ethical awareness and a sense of responsibility for the broader societal implications of research outcomes and professional actions - particularly in the context of sustainable development - are integral elements of this process.

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

The master's study programme Educational Sciences is coherent, well-structured, and aligned with national regulations and academic standards. Its content is topical and integrates current developments in educational theory, research, and practice. The study programme applies student-centered teaching methods that support active learning, critical thinking, and professional competence. The recent reorganization has enhanced institutional collaboration between RTU LA and RTU RA. The awarding of the master's degree is clearly grounded in the field's research achievements, with a strong focus on the integration of theory and practice.

Strengths:

1. The study programme demonstrates strong internal coherence and clear alignment between aims, content, and learning outcomes.
2. The curriculum is topical and integrates contemporary research and innovative pedagogical approaches.
3. Student-centred learning and teaching practices are effectively implemented, promoting autonomy and reflection.

Weaknesses:

1. An insufficient balance between labour-market relevance and broader academic aims. Further attention is needed to balance professional and labour-market relevance with the broader academic and civic purposes of higher education.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme is based on the established achievements and research findings of the relevant field. Its aims, content, and learning outcomes are aligned with current scientific knowledge, and the curriculum systematically incorporates contemporary theories, methods, and research results in the discipline.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. According to the SAR (p. 294), the studies take place at RTU LA training block Lielā street 14, Liepāja and RTU RA training block at Brīvības street 115, Rēzekne. As the general analysis is already provided in chapter 1.3., here the focus is mostly on this study programme.

Auditoriums used for studies are equipped with appropriate furniture and technical equipment that allows lecturers to present their research in multimedia presentations. Experts stress that those modern possibilities are actively used. As an example of that a small case (which was told to experts during the site visit) will be presented here: One of the students of the RTU LA conducted a lesson for 5th grade students, to demonstrate the connection between natural sciences and mathematics, as well as the possibilities of modern innovative and technological solutions. Some of the tasks in this context were: creating spatial (3D) figures and viewing holograms (SAR, p. 294).

Experts visited the library in both RTU RA and in RTU LA. Both in the LA and RA, there are classes equipped with the computers in libraries; and special classes for joint-lectures (LA+RA+RTU) in the building. The collection contains approximately 61.000 information resources (93% of books, 7% of serial editions, etc). The library collection thematically corresponds to the study programme "Educational Sciences" of the study field "Education and Pedagogy". Of all the information resources available in the library, about 11% of the items in the collection are on these topics.

The library provides training, reference, and consultation on the use of information resources and the use of services. In 2024, the databases and other digital resources available in the RTU LA library were used in 24.400 connection sessions (SAR, p. 296). The academies are united with RTU, which means that the libraries are united, too: now 15 databases are available, before this number was only 4. Libraries welcome structural reform warmly. Also, students are happy: both in the LA and RA they use databases actively for free, and they can do it at home, too. The databases offer information resources on various topics of the courses to be taught, for example, the EBSCO e-book collection contains approximately 18.000 electronic publications.

In the RTU LA the library is open from 8.00 -19.00; there are about 65000 paper-books, 75% of them are on open shelves. Every day about 70 students visit the library, which is a good result, as in RTU LA there are about 1200 students. They have enough resources for the new books: about 15000 EUR per year. Also, final thesis can be found on open shelves from earlier years: now they are kept electronically only.

In Rezekne the library is open from 9.00 -17.00, but if needed, the times can be flexible. They can spend about 18000 EUR per year on literature, which they consider to be enough (for the education of about 6000.- EUR is available, but it is hard to fix it exactly, as many books can be used in different study programmes).

The RTU LA Centre for Pedagogy and Social Work (PSDC) plays a leading role in the implementation of the study programme. For the organization of practical seminars for students, an authentic learning environment has been created in two offices (classroom tables with castors and composite chairs for schoolchildren and a workplace for the teacher, as well as digital whiteboards ODIN) and in the hallway (OneTwenty multifunctional and modular product consisting of two basic products -

acoustic wall and puff, as well as Signs puff modules) with the aim of implementing a practice-based study process (SAR, p. 294). RTU RA has a well-equipped center for special education. The RTU RA organized additional courses for teachers in this region, in the context of different subjects. The academy is in Rezekne an educational center also in broader meaning, as it organizes, for example, the nights of science, which are very popular in the local environment (with more than 400 participants).

The material and technical provision provided for the implementation of the study programme and its availability to students and teaching staff, has high quality.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3. According to the SAR (p. 300), the master's study programme "Educational Sciences" is organized in short and long-term forms, and in Latvian and English languages. In parallel with full-time studies, it is planned to offer part-time studies, too, but they have not yet been implemented at either RTU LA or RTU RA. The financing of the study programme consists of the study base, part of the funding of the science base and the revenue of the study fee.

Both academies are important centers in the field of special education and speech therapy. The RTU LA Centre for Pedagogy and Social Work (PSDC) plays a leading role in the implementation of the study programme. The RTU RA has a well-equipped center for special education. In RTU RA costs per student are lower than in Latvia and OECD countries, with a tendency to increase from 2023. In RTU RA 75% goes for direct cost (academic and general staff remunerations), and 25% for indirect costs (library, land tax, rent of premises, rent, operating expenses of buildings etc). The funding of the science base and the funding of scientific activity (performance) before consolidation at RTU RA was not divided by study fields but was directed to the provision of scientific activity of RA (SAR, p. 298).

According to SAR Table 3.3.3.1. the number of study places financed from the state budget was 10 (in 2021), and now it is 23 already. A larger number of students is possible only by attracting additional funding in the form of private funding. The measures are taken for the control of student dropout, planning of the number of graduates, and planning of students enrolled in the 1st year. Experts were told that as prevention of drop out, the study programme director contacts personally always, when a student meets academic difficulties which may end with the drop out. According to the SAR (p. 299), the exact statistics can be described as next:

1. The number of study places financed from the State budget in 2025/26 is 20.
2. The tuition fee is EUR 3240. (In 2024 and 2025 nobody paid tuition fees.)
3. The total funding for the study field in 2024/25 was EUR 1 293 634, and 15% of the costs are made up of the study programme "Educational Sciences".

In the RTU LA, the funding for the results of the previous year in research and artistic creation is used by RTU LA in accordance with the approved budget. It is granted for support of the scientific activity of the academic staff involved in the study programme from the development budget of the RTU LA Pedagogy and Social Work Centre and the RTU LA Scientific Action Development Fund. The development budget of the Centre is also used for business trips to scientific conferences, their participation fees, and support for students' research (SAR, p. 299). The flexibility of the study programme is ensured by planning a common Part A (compulsory) and, in some cases, Part B (limited choice) for both the short and long forms, which would include courses that are implemented simultaneously in both the short and long forms, as well as simultaneously for all four short module specializations: "Diversity and Inclusion in Education", "Teaching and Learning for Competence," "Human Behavior and Education" and "Educational Management").

According to the SAR (p. 300), altogether there are 72 students. The number of students required to ensure the profitability of the study programme, is:

1. long form "Educational Sciences" (full-time - 2 years, 120 CP, language of study - Latvian) - 8 students,
2. long form "Educational Sciences" (full-time - 2 years, 120 CP, language of study - English) - 8 students,
3. short form (full-time - 1 year and 3 months, 75 CP, language of study - Latvian):
 - Specialization "Diversity and Inclusion in Education" - 8 students:
 - Specialization "Learning and Learning Competence" - 8 students,
 - Specialization "Educational Management" - 8 students,
 - Specialization "Human Behavior and Education" - 8 students.
4. Short form (full-time - 1 year and 3 months, 75 CP, language of study - English):
 - Specialization "Diversity and Inclusion in Education" - 12 students,
 - Specialization "Learning and Learning for Competence" - 12 students.

Experts prize the number of specializations, as it ensures the flexibility of the study programme. In this region it is good to prepare as different specialists as possible, under one study programme. In parallel with full-time studies, it is planned to offer part-time studies. Part-time studies have not yet been implemented at either RTU LA or RTU RA (SAR, p. 300). The conclusion is that the financial resources and provision of RTU LA and RTU RA are fully sufficient for high-quality, growth-oriented implementation of the study programme.

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

Both academies are important centers in the field of special education and speech therapy. The RTU LA Centre for Pedagogy and Social Work (PSDC) plays a leading role in the implementation of the study programme. The RTU RA has a well-equipped center for special education. The resources and provision of both academies are fully sufficient for high-quality, growth-oriented implementation of the study programme.

Strengths:

1. Auditoriums used for studies are equipped with appropriate furniture and technical equipment.
2. The modern IT possibilities are actively used.
3. The academies are united with RTU, and now 15 databases are available.
4. The number of study places financed from the state budget has increased in 5 years, about 100%.

Weaknesses: Not identified

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 resources and provision of both academies are fully sufficient for high-quality, growth-oriented implementation of the study programme.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

- 2.4.1. The second cycle (academic master's) study programme Educational Sciences (45142) is

implemented by a team of highly qualified, research-active and professionally experienced academics from RTU LA and RTU RA. According to SAR section 3.4.1 and Annex "List of academic staff_RTU LA_RTU RA", the study programme involves 38 academic staff members (RTU LA 19 members and RTU RA 19 members). The absolute majority of the teaching staff holds doctoral degrees and approximately about 20% academic staff hold master's degrees in pedagogy, educational management, psychology, or related fields.

The qualitative composition of staff fully complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Cabinet Regulation No. 240 (2018). The majority are elected academic staff (professors, associate professors, assistant professors, lecturers) whose scientific direction and methodological work correspond directly to the content of the study courses they teach. For example (SAR section 3.4.1.):

1. 2020 - 2023 Erasmus+ KA201 ProuD to Teach All: Professional Development Strengthening Competencies to Teach All Learners in an Inclusive Learning Environment, Nr.-2020-1-BE02-KA201-074764;
2. 2020 - 2023. NordPlus Horizontal Project "Pre-Service Teacher Career Perspectives to Facilitate Sustainable Inclusive Education Reforms/ Teacher-Student Career Perspectives for Sustainable Inclusive Education Reform";
3. 2021 - 2024 NAP project: "Transformation of the value of education for the cultural and economic growth of the social community", Nr. Izp-2020/1-0178;
4. 2021 - 2024 VPP "Research of the Modern Latvian Language and Development of Language Technologies", Nr. VPP-LETONIKA-2021/1-0006, project direction 4 "Data-based research of Latvian Sign Language";
5. 2022 - 2023 Research project with North-West University, South Africa. The influence of the pandemic on the affective state of school principals and teachers: An international comparative study;
6. 2022-2026. HORIZON Europe Framework Programme. HORIZON-MSCA-2021-SE-01 "Virtual Innovative Learning Laboratories for Global Engineering Education (VILLAGE)", Project ID: 101086464;
7. 2022 Procurement study, No.: MoES 2020/21/UK/ESF, "Study on prerequisites for a successful transition from pre-primary education to primary education" ESF project No.10.1.3.0/19/TP/002 "Support for research to ensure the fulfilment of the prerequisites for investments of EU funds for the 2021-2027 programming period in education";
8. 2024-2026 Research and Development Grant Project Nr.RTU-PA-2024/1-0074 "Social rehabilitation of autistic spectrum disorders with the use of smart sensory toys and psychological profiling";
9. 2024-2026 Research and Development Grant Project "NextGen Civic Engagement: Shaping Sustainable Urban Futures (NCESSUP)" (RTU-PA-2024/1-0040).

According to Academic Staff CVs (SAR Annex - RTU LA_RTU RA), 68% of staff members have more than 15 years of pedagogical experience, and approximately 20% combine their academic work with leadership positions in general or vocational education institutions — serving as principals, deputy heads, or methodologists. This dual professional-academic identity ensures the practical relevance and professional grounding of the Master's study programme, aligning with its purpose of strengthening leadership, innovation, and reflective teaching in education.

The SAR section 3.4.1. confirms that all staff members demonstrate competence in their fields through participation in national and international research, development of scientific publications, and teaching material preparation. Their selection follows defined institutional criteria ensuring expertise, foreign language proficiency, and ongoing professional development, this also enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses, during the on-site visit it was stated that, teaching staff have participated and continue to participate in courses offered by continuing education projects for academic staff, as well as in

teaching mobility programmes. The average age of the academic staff reflects a stable yet experienced academic profile. Several academics are nationally recognised experts contributing to educational reforms, policy papers, and teacher training frameworks.

All staff members meet the mandatory language requirements and use English for scientific communication, mobility, and course delivery, ensuring alignment with RTU's internationalisation strategy. During the on-site visit it was noticed that some members of academic staff were experiencing problems in communication due to the lack of knowledge of the foreign language (English), it is advised for some members of academic staff to improve foreign language knowledge.

2.4.2. RTU ensures that any staff changes do not compromise study programme quality through transparent recruitment, mentoring, and mobility systems. Recruitment follows the Regulation on Academic Staff Selection and Renewal and the Methodology for Funding Distribution and Utilisation for RTU Structural Units. Academic positions are announced publicly, and selection is based on academic qualifications, scientific achievements, and teaching quality. Between 2021 and 2024, moderate and justified changes were made to the teaching staff composition in both academies (SAR section 3.4.2. List of Changes in the Teaching Staff).

In total, nine changes occurred: five new staff members joined the study programme, and four long-serving lecturers retired or resigned due to workload or health reasons. Guest lecturers were involved in enhancing practice-based learning. Two new members of staff joined to strengthen educational management and language education courses. These changes have not negatively affected the study programme's quality; rather, they have diversified its expertise and strengthened cooperation with preschools, schools, and municipalities. Recruitment processes are transparent, competitive, and conducted according to RTU's regulations on academic staff selection. Mentoring is systematically implemented: new lecturers are paired with experienced colleagues for one academic year, jointly planning syllabi, co-teaching, and evaluating student feedback.

Newly appointed staff undergo mentoring by senior professors to facilitate integration into RTU's academic culture. As noted in the SAR (3.4.2), this system has ensured smooth transitions and sustained teaching excellence. The structure allows for cross-faculty engagement — if necessary, lecturers from other RTU faculties contribute their expertise to specific courses, ensuring interdisciplinary alignment.

Since 2021, the study programme has also benefited from increased academic mobility. Several new lecturers have joined after completing doctoral studies at RTU, University of Latvia (LU), and Daugavpils University (DU). RTU's partnership network extends to Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VeA), ensuring resource exchange and guest lectures.

Internationally, RTU collaborates with University of Tartu (Estonia), Tallinn University (Estonia), University of Oulu (Finland), Vilnius University (Lithuania), and Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (Poland) through staff exchange and Erasmus+ teaching mobility. These partnerships strengthen the study programme's academic continuity and provide access to diverse research cultures.

According to SAR Annex 12, the FTE ratio of students to teaching staff in the Master's study programme is 10.8:1, which is better than both the Latvian average (14:1) and the OECD average for similar programmes (16:1, Education at a Glance 2024). This ratio supports individual supervision and personalised guidance, particularly for Master's thesis development.

Workload is distributed according to RTU's internal regulations and verified annually via the ORTUS digital system. Teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities are balanced (on average 60% teaching, 25% research, 15% administration).

During the on-site visit the staff confirmed that integration within RTU improved transparency and recognition of project and research hours. However, administrative workload has increased due to unified digital reporting. Allocating additional dedicated research time (currently 40 hours per year) could further enhance scientific output and publication quality.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. The academic staff of the Master's study programme are research-active and contribute significantly to both national and international projects. According to SAR Annex – Scientific Publications by Academic Staff (RTU LA, RTU RA), during the period 2019–2024, staff produced 82 scientific publications, including 33 peer-reviewed articles (of which 11 are indexed in Scopus or Web of Science), 13 monographs, and 9 teaching materials. On average, each active lecturer has 3.1 publications over the past three years - a strong performance compared with national benchmarks for similar programmes. Examples of notable publications include:

1. "Transformative Digital Learning: Emerging Cases and Considerations" (RA, 2021) - included in the RTU Research Institute for Regional Studies series;
2. "Modern Personality Theories" (RA, 2018) and "Developmental Psychology" (RA, 2018);
3. "Pedagogical Competences for Sustainable Development" (RTU LA, 2023).

Staff members present regularly at international conferences, including the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER), Child. Teacher. Education (Latvia), Nordic Educational Leadership Forum (Finland), and Education for Sustainable Futures (Lithuania).

RTU RA academics participate in national and international research projects funded by the Latvian Council of Science and the European Commission, such as:

1. VPP-IZM-Education-2023/1-0001 (2023–2026) "Individualised and Personalised Support System for the Development of Pupils' Text Literacy";
2. VPP-LETONIKA-2021/4-0002 "Demography and Migration Processes";
3. IzVeTSKKEI (2021–2023) "Transformation of the Value of Education for Cultural and Economic Growth";
4. Erasmus+ Empowering Mathematics Education for All (2024–2026).

RTU LA academic staff lead or participate in multiple European projects:

1. INTEC - Developing an Innovative In-service Training Model for ECEC Staff (2023-2026);
2. TeCCh-Ed - Designing a Technology-enhanced Climate Change Education Curriculum (2022-2024);
3. Proud to Teach All (2020-2023);
4. ArtWIN (2021-2024);
5. Nordplus Horizontal "Pre-Service Teacher Career Perspectives" (2020-2023).

In addition, staff members have participated in international mobilities in Germany, Poland, Finland, and Estonia (Annex 17), expanding the international dimension of the programme.

Overall, the staff's research output and engagement clearly contribute to the high quality of the Master's programme. Research findings are systematically integrated into course content - especially in "Educational Leadership" "Research in Education," and "Human Behaviour and Education".

All academic staff fully comply with national legal requirements concerning publication or professional experience (SAR section 3.4.2). A significant proportion of lecturers combine active research with over five years of educational leadership experience, including work as principals, teacher trainers, or education policy consultants.

Lecturers have published several methodological and policy documents, including RTU Research Methodology Handbook for Master's Students (2022) and Latvian Guidelines for Competence-Based Curriculum Implementation (2021). Professors have coordinated projects under the European Education Area framework, contributing to OECD consultations on teacher professionalism.

The close connection between academic and professional expertise ensures that the study content remains relevant and responsive to current educational challenges. During the on-site visit the employers noted that graduates display strong analytical, leadership, and mentoring competences -

a direct reflection of the staff's experience-based teaching.

2.4.5. Collaboration among teaching staff is institutionalised and aligns with the ESG2015 standard that quality arises from interaction between academic staff, students, and learning environments. SAR section 3.4.5. states that two levels of collaboration are evident:

- (1) Intra-academy cooperation, ensuring integration of subjects and unified assessment within each campus;
- (2) Inter-academy cooperation, ensuring the same academic standards and methodological approaches between RTU LA and RTU RA.

According to the data from on-site visit and SAR section 3.4.5. each course in the Master's study programme is coordinated by a lead lecturer responsible for academic content and quality control. Courses are co-taught by lecturers from both academies where possible — for example, "Content and Learning Approaches in the Arts" and "Educational Management". Joint meetings are held monthly via MS Teams; annual face-to-face seminars take place alternately in Liepāja and Rēzekne. Joint outputs include:

- Development of unified Moodle e-courses,
- Annual self-assessment of the programme and course improvements,
- Collaborative student conferences (Child. Teacher. Education),
- Joint methodological publications (e.g., Anthill of Ideas / Ideju pūznis).

Professional development is systematic and data-driven. In the last three years, the majority of staff participated in RTU's internal professional development courses, including:

1. AI in the Pedagogical Process (4 lecturers, 2023),
2. Assessment Training for Teaching Staff (7 lecturers, 2023),
3. Academic Integrity and Ethics (8 lecturers, 2024),
4. English for Academic Purposes (7 lecturers, 2022).

Moreover, during 2022–2024, 16 lecturers (61%) completed the 160-hour higher education didactics course "Innovations in the Higher Education System". Mentoring plays a vital role: each newly recruited lecturer is supported by an experienced professor throughout the first academic year. Co-teaching and regular peer feedback ensure pedagogical consistency and skill development. Staff also engage in creative and artistic activities relevant to the study field: several are choir conductors, art directors, or workshop organisers, thus strengthening the artistic and cultural dimension of the study programme.

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

The Educational Sciences (Master's) study programme is implemented by a highly qualified and research-active teaching team whose academic composition, research engagement, and professional collaboration fully comply with ESG standards.

The academic staff demonstrate a strong integration of theory, leadership, and practice, supported by extensive experience in school management, inclusion, and teacher development.

The inter-academy cooperation model between RTU LA and RTU RA ensures consistent methodological quality and provides students with diverse learning perspectives.

Academic staff actively engage in international research projects and publications, contributing to the visibility and impact of Latvian educational sciences.

However, attention should be given to expanding research time within workload planning and encouraging more staff to publish in high-impact international journals. A gradual rejuvenation of the teaching staff profile will also strengthen long-term sustainability. To further enhance international

visibility, it would be advisable to expand cooperation with global doctoral networks and increase institutional incentives for Q1-Q4 journal publications.

Strengths:

1. Highly qualified academic staff with significant publication and project activity.
2. Strong cooperation with Latvian (LU, DU, VeA) and foreign universities (Tartu, Tallinn, Oulu, Vilnius, Maria Curie-Skłodowska).
3. Integration of research and teaching, with active student participation in projects.
4. Established mentoring and staff development culture within RTU LA and RTU RA.
5. Systematic cooperation mechanisms through digital platforms and research networks.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited number of visiting professors delivering English-medium courses.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff of the Master's study programme Educational Sciences fully comply with national and institutional qualification requirements. The high proportion of PhD holders, strong publication record, and sustained collaboration with Latvian and European universities ensure continuity, academic excellence, and research relevance.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The master's study programme "Educational Sciences" has been developed and implemented in accordance with the state academic education standard Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 240 of September 2, 2014 "Regulations on State Academic Education Standards" (SAR Annex: Academic Master's study programme "Educational Sciences" Evaluation of the compliance of the study programme with the national education standard).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study course descriptions are prepared in both languages of implementation - Latvian and English (SAR Annex "Study_course_Educational_Sciences_EN_E_S.docx")

Studies are provided in types of full time and part time (SAR, p. 251 - 255).

The requirements are fulfilled by including these courses in the study content: Environmental Protection Law; Civil Protection and Disaster Management (SAR Annex: Academic Master's study programme "Educational Sciences" Evaluation of the compliance of the study programme with the national education standard).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Diploma and its annex correspond to the requirements stated in Regulations No 202 issued by Cabinet of Ministers "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus (SAR Annex: Diploma un diploma pielikumu paraugi _Izglitibas_zin_mag_LV_ENG.pdf).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All RTU LA - 19 - teaching staff members have a PhD and All RTU RA - 19 - teaching staff members have a PhD (SAR Annexes: List of academic staff_RTU LA_RTU RA.xlsx; Academic staff_CV RTU LA_RTU RA_ENG.zip).

Also SAR Annex "Confirmation - on compliance of the academic staff.edoc" confirms that academic staff involved in implementation of the study programme "Educational Sciences"(45142) complies with the provisions set out in Section 55, Paragraph 1, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions - majority of the teaching staff are professors and associate professors together elected at RTU or regional partner academies participate in the implementation of the compulsory and limited elective parts of the study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is a confirmation provided that the official state language knowledge of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme “Educational Sciences (45142) complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 157 of 8 March 2022 “Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language” for performing professional and office duties. The level of Latvian knowledge of individual persons is indicated in the biographies (SAR Annexes: Confirmation - knowledge of the state language.edoc; Academic staff_CV RTU LA_RTU RA_ENG.zip; List of academic staff_RTU LA_RTU RA.xlsx).

- 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

There is a confirmation (SAR Annex: Confirmation - knowledge of the foreign language.edoc) provided by RTU that the knowledge of the foreign language (English) of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme “Educational Sciences” (SAR Annex: List of academic staff_RTU LA_RTU RA.xlsx) have at least B2 level proficiency according to “The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” of a foreign or an official language, or at least C1 level proficiency if the teaching staff member has not acquired secondary or higher education in the official language. The level of English language proficiency of individual persons is indicated in the biographies of the teaching staff (SAR Annex: Academic staff_CV RTU LA_RTU RA_ENG.zip).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study agreement content-wise meets all the mandatory requirements stated in Regulation No 70 of Cabinet of Ministers “Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi” (only in Latvian) (SAR Annexes: Sample of study agreement.zip, ASD_studiju_ligums_ENG.pdf).

- 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

Confirmations have been provided that students of the study programme “Educational Sciences” will be provided with the opportunity to continue their education in the corresponding study programme “Educational Sciences (45142) of University of Latvia (agreement with the University of Latvia in SAR Annex: Information on the possibilities of continuing studies.docx) if the implementation of the study programme at RTU is terminated.

- 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

The confirmation signed by the rector has been provided 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 (SAR Annex: Confirmation - on compensation for losses.edoc).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The documentation provided by RTU approves the compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

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

The study programme Educational Sciences is coherent, strategically aligned with national, institutional, and European priorities, and well-integrated within the study field. It demonstrates responsiveness to accreditation recommendations through targeted improvements in learning outcomes, admission requirements, and thesis structure, reflecting a strong quality assurance culture. The study programme is academically, economically, and socially relevant, supporting labour market needs, lifelong learning, inclusion, and internationalisation. Further strengthening data-driven analysis of student and graduate outcomes would enhance its continuous development and evidence-based decision-making.

The Educational Sciences master's study programme is delivered by an academically and research-oriented team, providing advanced professional and analytical competencies for educators and education leaders. The research activity of the teaching staff has intensified significantly. In the last six years, more than 100 publications have been produced, 18% of which appear in Q1-Q2 journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. Academic staff are active participants in national and international projects. The study programme fully complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the standards set by RTU. Staff demonstrate a clear commitment to pedagogical excellence and digital competence. Continuous professional development is supported through RTU's Centre for Academic Excellence. The main improvement area identified is the need to extend institutional support for research time and further encourage international publication, particularly in higher-tier journals. Nevertheless, the study programme's strengths - qualified staff, solid research output, and well-integrated management - clearly outweigh these minor limitations. The Educational Sciences study programme also makes an important regional contribution, strengthening the professional and scientific capacity of educators in both western and eastern Latvia. Its presence in Liepāja and Rēzekne promotes accessibility of graduate-level studies outside Riga and directly supports regional development priorities by preparing educational leaders capable of addressing local challenges through evidence-based innovation. Overall, the Educational Sciences (Master's) study programme demonstrates academic excellence, research depth, and social relevance, preparing highly qualified professionals capable of advancing educational development in Latvia and

internationally.

The resources and provision of both academies are fully sufficient for high-quality, growth-oriented implementation of the study programme.

Evaluation of the study programme "Educational Sciences"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Educational Sciences"

Short-term recommendations

1. Provide professional development activities to the staff focused on data literacy to foster in-depth analysis of the data available with regard to the study programme (e.g. student and graduate dynamics, graduate career paths, satisfaction, impact) and the use of PowerBI, over the next two academic years.

Long-term recommendations

1. Extend the allocated research time for academic staff (currently 40 hours per year) to enable meaningful engagement in research and international publication activities.

II - "Educational Sciences" ASSESSMENT

II - "Educational Sciences" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The Joint Third-cycle Doctoral Study Programme "Educational Sciences" (51142) demonstrates full compliance with the study field Education and Pedagogy. The study programme aligns with the Cabinet Regulation No. 595 on the Groups of Scientific Disciplines, Branches and Sub-sectors of Science of Latvia, confirming its classification within the Social Sciences group and the Educational Sciences branch (SAR, p. 118). The design of the study programme reflects the research and science-based orientation of educational sciences and ensures the integration of high-level academic inquiry and research practice.

Different partner universities work together for this programme. These are the University of Latvia, Daugavpils University, and Riga Technical University, which implement the programme at RTU LA and RTU RA (SAR, p. 118). The study programme is designed to promote interdisciplinarity, internal mobility of doctoral students among the participating universities, and the enhancement of research capacity nationwide. This synergy is a nice example as it fully supports the objectives of the national education and science policy as mentioned in the report "Proposals for the provision of conceptually new competency-based education in Latvia" (Ministry of Education and Science).

The goals of the study programme are closely aligned with and directly support the overarching goals of the study field Education and Pedagogy. The study field emphasises excellence in research-based education, internationalisation, interdisciplinarity, and the strengthening of national research capacity—objectives clearly reflected in the study programme's design. By integrating science-based studies, promoting internal mobility across partner universities, and ensuring synergy among institutional research strengths, the study programme advances the study field's aim of developing

high-level, innovative, and internationally competitive educational science research. The study programme's aim, namely to improve doctoral students' research and academic competence for conducting independent, original, and impactful research, mirrors the field's emphasis on producing new knowledge that enhances educational theory and pedagogical practice at all levels.

The programme has systematically strengthened its compliance with the level and organisation of scientific research while acknowledging remaining development needs. Since the previous accreditation, substantial changes have been implemented directly following expert recommendations, including the consolidation of learning outcomes, optimisation of study programme scope to 198 ECTS in line with the new national doctoral model, revision of study courses to avoid content overlap, and a clearer alignment of the degree title and scientific field with the national classification of sciences. These changes have enhanced the coherence between research activities, doctoral training content, and expected level 8 learning outcomes of the EQF, particularly by reinforcing research ethics, publication-based thesis development, and structured doctoral supervision.

At the same time, the evaluation recognises that, despite clear progress in study programme structure, governance, and research integration across partner institutions, the relatively short implementation period, limited number of defended doctoral theses, and still-developing longitudinal data on research outputs and doctoral completion rates constrain full demonstration of research maturity and impact. This is in line with the Partially Compliant assessment, as the programme is demonstrably aligned with contemporary European and national standards for doctoral research, but requires further time and evidence—particularly in sustained research output, doctoral graduation dynamics, and measurable scientific impact — to fully confirm compliance with the advanced level of scientific research expected in the study field.

2.1.2. The SAR gives evidence that the Joint PhD study programme “Educational Sciences” demonstrates strong internal consistency between its title, code, degree, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements. The code (51142) aligns with the Classification of Latvian Education (Cabinet Regulation No. 322), correctly identifying it as a third-cycle higher education study programme in Educational Sciences. The degree awarded - Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Social Sciences - is consistent with the regulatory framework amended in 2022 and is aligned with the current Law on Scientific Activity (SAR, pp. 117-118).

The study programme's primary aim is to develop independent researchers capable of producing original contributions to educational science theory and practice. This overall aim is well-supported by the objectives. These include strengthening the research competence, promoting educational innovation, and linking academic work with educational practice at different levels of the educational system.

The learning outcomes correspond to Level 8 of the European and Latvian Qualifications Frameworks (EQF/LQF) and reflect the third cycle qualification level of the European Higher Education Area. The overview of the different study courses to study programme-level outcomes demonstrates that each course contributes to the attainment of the study programme goals in terms of knowledge, skills, and competences.

The entry requirements (SAR, p. 121) are based on 1) the diploma obtained, including a Master's degree in education, pedagogy, psychology, or related fields. Due to recent updates, engineering is added as well; 2) two years of pedagogical experience, and 3) an entrance examination. These requirements are relevant and justified, and they are in line with the study programme's research focus. The unified criteria and entry procedures are developed to ensure equity across partner institutions. The process is coordinated by the University of Latvia as the main partner.

The study programme lasts 3 years (198 ECTS) (SAR, p. 120). This is appropriate for doctoral-level studies and complies with the new Latvian doctoral model (Cabinet Order No. 345, 2020). There is a clear breakdown of mandatory courses, electives, research, and think-tank activities.

The study programme is delivered in both Latvian and English, supporting the internationalization goals and inclusivity. This policy is supported by language proficiency requirements.

2.1.3. The SAR provides evidence of corrections and improvements implemented in the study programme. These corrections include (SAR, pp. 116-117):

1. The study programme Title and Terminology: standardized English terminology is used (Educational Sciences) to ensure consistency across institutions and international clarity.
2. The degree formulation is revised according to the Law on Scientific Activity amendments (2022) and is now “Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Social Sciences”.
3. A master’s degree in engineering is now included in the admission possibilities which broadens the interdisciplinary participation while maintaining relevance.
4. The amount of ECTS reduced from 216 to 198 to comply with Latvian requirements.
5. The number of learning outcomes is reduced from 23 to 9, in line with previous expert recommendations. This increases the focus and coherence of the study programme.
6. Several curricular adjustments took place: the course National Defence, Civil and Environmental Protection (3 ECTS) is now included in the study programme plan to comply with national regulations, overlapping courses were avoided (Trends in the Development of Didactics Theories is removed; Current Issues in Developmental Psychology added), part C (6 ECTS) was added for free-choice or international experience.

All these modifications are grounded in official Study Quality Commission’s Decisions (No. 2022/27-SPI and No. 2024/42-A). The corrections are well-analyzed, justified, and supported by the different institutions involved. They strengthen the internal coherence of the study programme, the alignment with the legislation and the overall quality.

2.1.4. The third cycle (doctoral) study programme "Educational Sciences" was established in 2020 in line with the Ministry of Education and Science's 2017 report, addressing national needs for high-level educational expertise. The SAR (p. 122) refers to OECD data that highlight that Latvia has a very low number of doctoral degree holders (0.3% vs 1.1% in OECD countries). This establishes a strong economic and social rationale for the study programme: increasing doctoral qualifications is a national priority for research, education quality, and for the knowledge economy. The PhD study programme aligns with European and international strategies, including the Bologna Process, EU modernisation process and employment criteria, and recommendations from the World Bank on doctoral studies. This underlines a clear social and economic justification of the study programme, at national and international levels. The study programme is also an answer to the aging academic workforce in Europe, that emphasizes the societal need for trained researchers and academic staff at doctoral level.

The initial enrolment in 2020/2021 was 6 students across partner universities (RA and LA). The subsequent years show variable enrolment: 7/14/17/17 students in the years 2021/2022 to 2024/2025. Four students dropped out over four years, due to personal or financial reasons. The report sees this as not critical but acknowledges it reflects a national challenge in doctoral education (SAR, p. 126).

The graduate employment is no area of concern. Two graduates have obtained their doctoral degrees and are employed as researchers and academic staff at higher education institutions. The current doctoral students are all already engaged in academic, educational, and policy roles. On top of that, the study programme actively supports student mobility, interdisciplinary training, and research capacity, actions that enhance graduates’ employability both nationally and internationally.

2.1.5. The joint third cycle (doctoral) study programme “Educational Sciences” is unique in Latvia. The study programme is the result of a merger of four previous doctoral programmes into a single

joint doctoral study programme (SAR, p. 127). This consolidates resources, expertise, and competencies across partner universities. The University of Latvia is designated as the lead institution. The partner universities were carefully selected based on specialization areas to cover the full spectrum of educational sciences. The roles and responsibilities of each contributing university are clearly defined. Legal agreements were developed, and operational coordination is described to ensure shared responsibility for the implementation, the supervision, and the quality assurance.

This joint effort is supported through national reports and strategic goals: it is a wise practice to create synergy, which leads to efficient use of resources and aligns with trends in the remainder of the European higher education landscape. It is recognized as topical and nationally relevant by the Higher Education Quality Commission (2022).

The study programme aims at research excellence, and is an answer to societal needs, confirming its strategic importance. It has a structured curriculum: 147 ECTS for Part A (including doctoral thesis, research, and examinations), 45 ECTS for Part B (skills, electives) and 6 ECTS for Part C (think-tanks). This design follows international standards such as the Salzburg II recommendations, the Bologna Process, and European Qualifications Framework. In order to support mobility and foster accessibility, remote learning is also included. The quality assurance processes are robust. A two-level doctoral council system is in place, clearly defining responsibilities, strategic versus operational quality functions, and partner representation. This governance model has been designed and systematically implemented from the study programme's very start. The quality processes were jointly created by all academic partners, to ensure shared ownership and coordinated academic standards. The two-level doctoral council system is the translation of this design: the joint doctoral council performs the strategic quality functions established during programme development (e.g., defining academic standards, staff selection principles, admissions criteria, examination procedures), while the individual partners councils implement these standards within their own context. The expert team notices evidence for this approach, given the coordinated adjustment of programme scope based on previous accreditation requirements and the delivery of joint components in the study programme (e.g., the shared online courses, think-tanks, and cross-institutional examinations).

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

The Joint Third cycle (Doctoral) Study Programme "Educational Sciences" (51142) fully complies with the national and European quality standards for third-cycle studies. The title, degree, and study code are consistent with regulatory and field-specific classifications. Its structure, objectives, and implementation mechanisms demonstrate coherence, strategic alignment with national higher education reforms, and responsiveness to expert recommendations. The study programme is robust, research-oriented, and appropriately designed to achieve advanced learning outcomes in the field of educational sciences.

The admission requirements are aligned with study programme goals, considering prior educational background and relevant professional experience. The programme scope (198 ECTS) and duration (3 years) are appropriate for the doctoral level, with a clear overview of mandatory courses, electives, research, and think-tank activities.

The SAR provides strong justification for the study programme, showing clear economic and social relevance. Student enrolment data is presented transparently, showing modest but positive growth, with dropout issues addressed through recent legal and funding reforms. Employment data, though limited due to the study programme's recent inception, demonstrates alignment with the study programme's objectives.

The development and implementation of the joint study programme are fully justified. Partner universities are appropriately chosen, roles are well defined, and quality assurance mechanisms are

adequate. The study programme design follows international best practices, ensuring a high-quality doctoral education process.

Strengths:

1. Strong alignment with national and international strategic priorities.
2. Promotes interdisciplinary research and international collaboration.
3. Clear rationale for merging multiple doctoral study programmes.
4. Clear admission criteria allowing a wide range of applicants from relevant disciplines.
5. Adequate integration of research, coursework, and skill development (e.g., methodological seminars, colloquia, think-tanks).
6. Comprehensive joint quality assurance framework.

Weaknesses: Not identified

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The content of the Joint Third cycle (Doctoral) Study Programme “Educational Sciences” is described as up-to-date and comprehensive, aligning closely with current industry needs, labor market demands, and scientific trends (strategically developed). The study programme comprises 198 ECTS. Part A (147 ECTS) includes 123 ECTS common to all participating universities — doctoral thesis development (96 ECTS) and preparation of publications and conference participation (27 ECTS) — as well as 15 ECTS of educational sciences study courses taught by the University of Latvia as the lead partner, and 9 ECTS of doctoral examinations (foreign language, educational sciences, and subfield examinations). Part B (45 ECTS) consists of 3 ECTS of general skills courses and a 15 ECTS assistant professorship internship implemented across all institutions, along with five elective modules in educational sciences (21 ECTS) delivered by participating higher education institutions. Part C includes 6 ECTS for participation in Doctoral School think-tanks or equivalent experience at foreign universities or research institutions, offered by all institutions involved in the programme (SAR pp. 120-121). The study programme’s structure covers all officially recognized sub-sectors of educational sciences in Latvia, from subject didactics to inclusive education and digital transformation, ensuring a broad yet interrelated curriculum. Each study course/module has clearly defined aims, tasks, and intended learning outcomes that correspond directly to the overall objectives of the study programme, indicating that courses are complementary and collectively contribute to the study programme’s goals. For example, the preparation of publications and participation in scientific conferences is a clear goal for students, supported by tasks that gradually increase in expectations, such as presenting first at national and later at international conferences (Part A). The content is periodically updated. The study programme also encourages internationalization through mobility (this was also highlighted at the site visits), thereby keeping the content relevant and globally informed. For example, technology as a support for learning — which was also evident in the topics of the publications. Possible problem points: Coordinating content across three partner universities in this joint study programme may pose challenges in maintaining consistency and coherence, which can lead to variations when responsibilities shift between individuals or when new goals are being defined.

2.2.2. The awarding of the degree is firmly rooted in scholarly achievement and the latest findings in the field of educational science. The academic staff involved are all qualified researchers and are active in various sub-fields of educational sciences and related disciplines, which helps ensure that teaching and supervision are informed by current research developments (see SAR p. 138). Many staff members are recognized experts and have substantial research output – including international

publications, conference papers, monographs – covering contemporary topics such as digital learning, inclusive education, sustainability in education, and pedagogical innovation. The content of the study programme’s courses is explicitly based on these research results: course descriptions list lecturers’ own publications as mandatory reading, indicating that students engage with cutting-edge knowledge and methodologies. Doctoral students are required to conduct independent research that contributes new insights to educational sciences, as evidenced by the requirement of producing scientific publications and participating in conferences. The study programme’s close integration of research and teaching (e.g. involving students in faculty research projects, national research programmes, and grant-funded studies) ensures that the PhD degree is awarded on the basis of meaningful research findings and innovations in the field. While the motivation and commitment to world-class international research is evident, the current realisation of this ambition relies disproportionately on a small number of highly active researchers (became clearly evident during the site visits). This creates structural vulnerability and highlights the need for more systematic allocation of research time, stronger cross-institutional support mechanisms, and clearer strategic prioritisation at unit level (see also chapter 1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation of this report). Without broadening the research base and ensuring that expertise and supervision capacity are more evenly distributed, maintaining consistently high-quality research opportunities for all students across partner institutions may prove challenging.

2.2.3. The study programme “Educational Sciences” employs a variety of implementation methods designed to achieve the course and study programme learning outcomes, with a clear emphasis on student-centered learning. Teaching methods include interactive lectures, problem-oriented sessions, seminars, group work, discussions, and project-based tasks, all of which actively engage doctoral students in the learning process. Students’ prior knowledge and professional experience are valued – they are allowed flexibility such as choosing elective modules or even combining courses into an individualized module tailored to their research interests (ensuring the learning experience is personalized). The principles of student-centered teaching are also evident in how learning outcomes are formulated and communicated: outcomes are clearly stated to promote students’ understanding of expectations and encourage their co-responsibility in the learning process. It became evident during the site visits that the teachers were very committed to supporting the students, even after they had graduated. Throughout the study programme, feedback and support are prioritized: instructors provide regular consultations and formative feedback, criteria for assessments are made transparent in advance, and students are encouraged to partake in decision-making (through surveys, suggestion procedures, and discussions with faculty) to improve the study process.

2.2.4. The study programme includes a structured internship component termed Professor’s Assistant Practice I, II, III (totaling 15 ECTS across three semesters, SAR p. 142). The aim of the Professor’s Assistant Practice is to enhance doctoral students’ academic competence. The Professor’s Assistant Practice is effectively organized to enhance students’ academic and teaching competence. In this internship, each doctoral student works closely with a professor as a mentor, assisting in teaching duties and academic tasks to gain hands-on experience in pedagogical and organizational work at the higher education level. The internship tasks are tailored individually: students, together with their supervisor and the practice professor, develop a plan aligning tasks with the student’s doctoral research topic and the intended learning outcomes of the practice course. Students receive regular guidance and feedback through consultations with the supervising professor, and they have opportunities to reflect on their progress and adjust their practice plan if needed – culminating in a presentation of their accomplishments at the end of each practice period (see, SAR p. 140). The tasks undertaken (such as conducting seminars, developing course materials, or engaging in research projects) directly reinforce the study programme’s learning outcomes by

allowing students to apply theory to practice, improve their communication and teaching skills, and learn to implement research-based innovations in an educational setting. One challenge might be ensuring consistency in the quality of mentorship and opportunities across different supervisors.

2.2.5. The JDSP provides clearly defined and well-structured opportunities for doctoral students to progress to the defense of their thesis (SAR p. 143). The study programme ensures that each doctoral candidate works closely with a scientific supervisor (and, if needed, a consultant) who provides ongoing guidance and mentors the student in publishing and presenting research. There are formal milestones such as annual progress attestations, intermediate colloquia, and a pre-defense, all overseen by the joint doctoral council, which help keep students on track for a successful defense. The universities actively support promotion opportunities by encouraging mobility (e.g., participation in Erasmus+ exchanges and international doctoral summer schools) and offering financial support: doctoral candidates can compete for research grants, publishing support, and are even employed as research assistants or under a new doctoral funding model that provides paid positions while conducting their research (this support was also highlighted and valued at the site visit).

2.2.6. The topics of students' final doctoral theses in the study programme are closely aligned with the field of educational sciences and pertinent to both academic and practical needs in education, indicating strong relevance. Doctoral candidates often select their research topics based on real-world experience or pressing issues in their professional environment, demonstrating that the chosen themes are grounded in sectoral needs and labour market demands (e.g. Development of the e-study process in a militarized educational institution).

In other cases, topics emerge through participation in research projects or collaborative initiatives, ensuring that doctoral work contributes meaningfully to ongoing scholarly discourse. The study programme highlights that these dissertation topics are not only relevant but also of high quality and impact: students have presented their findings at international conferences, earning positive recognition and citations, which indicates resonance with the wider academic community. During the review period, several theses were successfully defended on themes such as transformative digital learning, e-learning in specialized contexts, and reflective learning strategies to support student achievement — each addressing contemporary challenges in education. However, a minor point of criticism is that dissertation topics appear to stem more from individual interests than from a systematic, professor-led research agenda. From the perspective of building critical mass, it would be beneficial in the future to consider how to develop stronger, more cohesive research areas to which doctoral projects are connected.

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

The study programme “Educational Sciences” represents a coherent and well-functioning academic framework. The main conclusions of the review indicate that the doctoral study programme demonstrates several strong foundations while also facing challenges that affect its overall effectiveness. The evidence gathered—particularly during the site visits—shows that the study programme’s structure, content, and research orientation are largely aligned with contemporary expectations for high-quality doctoral education. At the same time, the assessment reveals that certain systemic issues, such as thesis completion rates and the coherence of research themes, limit the programme’s full potential. These findings suggest that while many elements are functioning well in practice, additional strategic coordination and stronger support mechanisms would further enhance student progress and research impact. Moreover, the conclusions highlight a clear contrast between the programme’s well-developed academic framework and the practical obstacles that hinder timely graduation. Overall, the review underscores both the robustness of the study

programme's academic design and the need for targeted improvements to ensure consistent and measurable outcomes.

Strengths:

1. **Strong Research Integration:** With research-active faculty and requirements for publications and conference participation, the doctoral programme firmly bases its degree awarding on original research and scientific achievements. Students benefit from involvement in real research projects and are guided to contribute new knowledge to the field.
2. **Student-Centered Delivery:** The teaching methods are diverse and student-focused, promoting active learning, critical thinking, and flexibility (including support for distance learning and individualized study paths).
3. **Effective Practical Training:** The inclusion of the Professor's Assistant Practice gives doctoral students valuable practical experience in teaching and academic work. This internship is well-designed with tailored tasks and mentorship, directly reinforcing the study programme's learning outcomes and better preparing students for academic or educational leadership careers.
4. **Clear Path to Doctoral Defense:** The study programme provides a well-structured roadmap for completing the doctorate, with defined milestones (exams, colloquia, pre-defense) and support systems (supervisors, doctoral councils, funding opportunities). Students have access to guidance, resources, and even financial support (grants, employment) to facilitate the completion and defense of their thesis in a timely manner.
5. **Relevant and Impactful Research Topics:** Doctoral thesis topics emerging from the study programme are pertinent to current educational issues and needs. They often bridge theory and practice, which enhances their value to the labor market.

Weaknesses:

1. Dissertation topics currently appear to be shaped mainly by individual student interests rather than by a shared.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The curriculum is consistently updated in line with current research developments, and the study programme is delivered by research-active faculty who integrate contemporary scientific knowledge into teaching and supervision. Doctoral students engage in real research projects, contribute to scholarly publications, and develop dissertations that address current issues in the field. These elements demonstrate that the study programme's content and academic activities are firmly rooted in up-to-date scientific evidence and disciplinary advances.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. Studies in the third cycle (doctoral) study programme take place in the RTU RA study block at Atbrīvošanas Alley 115, Rzekne; and in the RTU LA study block Lielā street 14, Liepāja. Experts visited both buildings and saw that the material, technical and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. At the University of Latvia (UL), the study process is carried out in a teaching building, where there are 41

auditoriums, including computer labs and a library with a reading room. The Daugavpils University (DU) provides facilities for studies, research and scientific communication in study buildings, where modernly equipped auditoriums, a library, and equipment for organizing video conferences are located (SAR, pp. 147-148).

RTU LA doctoral students have access to the Centre for Innovation of Creativity and Education, the Speech Therapy Centre with the Speech and Voice Research Laboratory and the Music Therapy Centre. Already 20 years, the RTU RA has been operating a Special Pedagogy Laboratory, which ensures the connection of science with society and practice in special and general education institutions of Latvia. There is also a Laboratory of Social Pedagogy and Rehabilitation Technologies, which provides an experimental base for approbation of scientific research. In 2018, the Multisensory Room was installed, which is one of the most modern in the Baltic States. The Pedagogical Technology Laboratory ensures scientific-methodological activity in the implementation of innovative technologies and the development of methodologies for the solution of pedagogical issues (SAR, p. 147).

Experts visited the library in both RTU RA and RTU LA. The libraries offer users the following databases: ScienceDirect, Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCO, School world (Skolas Vārds), etc. Part of the databases can also be used remotely. In the RTU LA the library is open from 8.00 -19.00; there are about 65000 paper-books, 75% of them are on open shelves. The library has enough resources for the new books: about 15000 EUR per year. In Rezekne the library is open from 9.00 -17.00, but if needed, the times can be flexible. They can spend about 18000 EUR per year on literature, which they consider to be enough (for the field of education about 6000.- EUR is available, but it is hard to fix it exactly, as many books can be used in different programmes). The academies are united with RTU, which means that the libraries are united, too: now 15 databases are available, before this number was only 4. Libraries welcome structural reform warmly. Also, students are happy: both in the RTU LA and RTU RA they use databases actively for free, and they can do it at home, too. Both in the RTU LA and RTU RA, there are classes equipped with the computers in libraries; and special classes for joint-lectures (RTU LA+RTU RA+RTU) in the building.

Experts saw that the study/scientific/informative/material-technical provision are excellent: the conditions for the implementation of the doctoral study programme create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and enable to ensure a high-quality study process.

2.3.2. The implementation of the doctoral study programme takes place in cooperation with the partner universities, and experts prize this kind of joint-activity: it is important to cover the whole country, because there cannot be very many students on the doctoral level. During the site visit experts were told that the doctoral students are involved in projects, funded from various sources, such as the Council of Science, ESF, RRF, etc. Students act as research assistants or researchers in projects, receiving remuneration, support for participation in conferences for the publication of scientific articles. The students also can use resources developed by the academic staff of RTU RA and RTU LA in cooperation with other higher education institutions. The RTU RA and RTU LA provide students with access to databases of international scientific publications, as well as the possibility to use the data processing programme SPSS is provided (SAR, p. 149). During the site visit experts also were told that the doctoral students can take advantage of the ERASMUS+ exchange programme and study for a semester or an entire academic year at another European Union university and use the material base of the respective university for studies and research. In practice, this is not very common, as doctoral students have jobs and family - as was told to the experts during the site visit. However, experts also met a student who lives abroad permanently.

Students can use resources developed by the academic staff of RTU RA and RTU LA in cooperation with other higher education institutions. For example, the partners of the ESF project "Increasing the Digital Capacity of Higher Education Institutions with Smart Integration of Online Learning Resources and Analytics" are Liepaja University (now RTU LA), Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences,

Daugavpils University, Rezekne Academy of Technology (now RTU RA), Latvian Maritime Academy of Riga Technical University. Within the framework of the implementation of the project, the university cooperated with internationally recognized providers of digital skills acquisition process support services, including open online courses (MOOC) platforms.

The experts are convinced that the study and science provision, including cooperation with other universities and their resources, meet the conditions for the implementation of the doctoral study programme and for achieving learning and research outcomes.

2.3.3. According to the SAR (p. 150), the cost of the study place in the third cycle (doctoral) study programme "Educational Sciences" is 8 313.56 EUR (the coefficient is 1.7). From SAR table 3.3.3.1. one can read that there are 3 students in 2025: compared to 2023 about 3 times less (in 2023 the number was 8). All 3 are full-time state funded students. The last fee-paying student participated in the program in 2021.

Experts find this kind of tendency – a small number of doctoral students – a bit worrying. As this is a joint study programme with 3 universities with 4 implementation places, there is a need for new lecturers in all higher educational institutions. However, according to the SAR (p. 152), the RTU does not set a minimum number of students for doctoral study programmes. But – as the number of study places financed from the state budget in 2025/26 is 20, maybe the minimum number of students should be still set, and new students could start, for example, every second year.

In 2025, the cost per student is 23432.- EUR, but in 2021 it was 13643.- EUR. A bigger number of students could help to optimize costs. The tuition fee is EUR 6,470 per study year.

According to the SAR (p. 151), in addition to the funding (SAR table 3.3.3.1.), the performance funding is used for the implementation of the study programme for the results in the provision of research-based higher education, which is not divided by study fields. It is used for the development of study infrastructure. The resources available to the study programme, and the use of funding sources ensure full implementation of the study process.

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

The experts are convinced that the study and science provision, including cooperation with other universities and resources, meet the conditions for the implementation of the doctoral study programme and for achieving learning and research outcomes. The resources available to the study programme, and the use of funding sources ensure full implementation of the study process. The study programme is well developed and strong, but the minimum number of students is not set.

Strengths:

1. There are 20 state-funded places in this study programme.
2. Several scientific projects were implemented, which can be considered as extra resources, to support conference trips, etc.
3. Students have the opportunity to use material and technical resources also from partner universities.
4. The joint study programme is well developed: the resources available to the study programme, and the use of funding sources ensure full implementation of the study process.

Weaknesses:

1. The number of new doctoral students has decreased about 3 times during the last years.
2. The minimum number of students is not set.

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

Studies in the third cycle (doctoral) study programme take place at the RTU RA, at the RTU LA, at the University of Latvia, and at the Daugavpils University. This kind of strong cooperation is the best solution for the whole country.

The resources available to the joint study programme, and the use of funding sources ensure full implementation of the study process.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The Joint third cycle (Doctoral) Study Programme "Educational Sciences" (51142) is implemented through collaboration between the University of Latvia, Daugavpils University, RTU LA and RTU RA, as defined in SAR section 3.4.1. The teaching staff qualifications fully comply with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, regarding the classification of scientific disciplines in Latvia. The obligatory criteria for the academic staff are: compliance of the qualification of academic staff with the requirements laid down in regulatory enactments; the scientific research direction/interests correspond to the content of the study programme/course and the knowledge of the appropriate national language and foreign languages. According to SAR section 3.4.1. the selection of academic staff of the JDSP "Educational Science" was carried out on the basis of the following documents:

1. Section 55.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia. Joint study programme;
2. Regulations Regarding Groups of Scientific Disciplines, Branches of Science and Sub-sectors of Latvia , 27.09.2022. Cabinet Regulation No. 595 ;
3. Procedures for granting the rights of an expert of the Latvian Council of Science of Science. Issued in accordance with Paragraph 3 of the 12.12.2017. Cabinet Regulation No. 724, Regulations Regarding the Qualification Criteria of Experts of the Latvian Council of Science, Establishment of Expert Commissions and Organisation of Their Activities.

Altogether, 20 academic staff members are involved in the study programme (RTU LA - 8, RTU RA - 12). Only academic staff with a doctoral degree who are elected professors, associate professors or leading researchers in a particular higher education institution have the right to work in doctoral level study programmes. The academic staff includes professors, associate professors, senior researchers, and leading specialists in educational sciences, psychology, and pedagogy.

The teaching staff expertise covers areas such as educational leadership, curriculum development, inclusive and special education, digital pedagogy, and teacher professional development. All lecturers meet the requirements for third-cycle studies, including publication in peer-reviewed journals and supervision experience for master's theses or doctoral dissertations.

Evidence from SAR Annex "Scientific publications of academic staff" confirms the active scholarly engagement of the teaching team. During the last six years, the academic staff published 126 peer-reviewed articles, 18% of which appeared in Q1-Q2 journals (e.g., Sustainability, Frontiers in Psychology, Education and Pedagogy Studies). Publications also appear in Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, Proceedings of RTU, Education in the Knowledge Society.

During the on-site visit, staff and doctoral candidates emphasized that supervisors combine theoretical depth with research mentoring skills, ensuring alignment between doctoral projects and institutional research priorities. The supervisors' competence contributes directly to study

programme outcomes - the development of researchers capable of producing original contributions to the field.

The qualification and composition of the academic staff thus fully support the study programme's aims to cultivate high-level educational researchers, consistent with EQF level 8 and Latvian Qualifications Framework standards.

2.4.2. According to SAR section 3.4.2. the partner universities have developed joint mechanisms ensuring staff continuity and replacement planning. The joint council structure defines how new supervisors are appointed, how responsibilities are redistributed, and how quality is maintained during personnel transitions.

Over the last three academic years, five new supervisors have joined the doctoral study programme, strengthening expertise in digital pedagogy, inclusive education, and learning analytics. These changes were implemented transparently through open calls and coordinated by the Joint Doctoral Council, as verified during the on-site visit. The transition procedures ensure that no doctoral candidate is left without a qualified supervisor; co-supervision models are used whenever necessary. In case of retirement or relocation, the supervision is continued by other qualified academic staff from partner institutions. The SAR Annex "Statistical data on mobility" confirms that internal mobility among supervisors is active - in 2023-2024, 11 co-supervisions were conducted across institutions, allowing continuity and methodological diversity.

Furthermore, new academic staff are systematically integrated through mentoring. Junior researchers receive guidance from senior supervisors, and internal training sessions on research ethics, doctoral supervision, and international publication strategies are held annually.

The institutions also provide stability by aligning workload distribution with supervision requirements. SAR (p. 125) specifies that supervisors are allocated up to 160 paid hours annually for doctoral guidance and research. This structured approach prevents overload and ensures continuous supervision quality.

Overall, these measures confirm that changes in teaching staff composition have not negatively affected the programme's implementation or compliance with legal requirements. On the contrary, the mechanisms have enhanced flexibility and interdisciplinary cooperation within the consortium.

2.4.3. The research productivity of the teaching staff is the cornerstone of this joint third cycle (doctoral) study programme. According to SAR Annex "Scientific publications of academic staff", during the last six years, RTU LA and RTU RA staff published more than 100 scientific outputs, including monographs, indexed articles, and international conference proceedings.

Representative examples include:

- "Digital Learning Pathways for Inclusive Classrooms: From Theory to Practice", published in Sustainability (Q1, 2023);
- "Reflective Professional Development of Teachers in Post-Pandemic Education", Frontiers in Psychology (Q2, 2022);
- "Education for Sustainable Development in Baltic Higher Education", Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability (Q3, 2021);
- "Pedagogical Leadership in Regional Contexts: Empowering Local Schools through Research-Based Practices", Education and Pedagogy Studies (Q4, 2020);
- "AI-Supported Learning Analytics for Early-Stage Research Training", Education in the Knowledge Society (Q2, 2023).

In addition, 12 monographs and edited volumes were published, such as:

- "Transformative Digital Learning: Emerging Cases and Considerations" (Rezekne Academy Press, 2021);
- "Professional Growth and Reflective Teaching in Early Childhood and Primary Education" (RTU

Press, 2023);

- "Innovations in Teacher Education and Didactics of Higher Education" (Liepāja Academy Press, 2022).

The staff are also active contributors to international conferences: European Educational Research Association (ECER, 2022, 2023); ATEE Annual Conference (Brussels, 2021; Vilnius, 2023); Baltic Sea Region Education Research Conference (Riga, 2022); International Conference on Lifelong Learning and Teacher Professionalism (Tallinn, 2023); International Conference on Digital Pedagogy and AI in Education (Rezekne, 2024).

Participation in national research programmes further supports the high quality of the doctoral environment. RTU LA and RTU RA academic staff serve as principal investigators or research leaders in:

- State Research Programme "Education" (2023–2026);
- Letonika for the Development of Latvian and European Society (2021–2024);
- IzVeTSKKEI -Transformation of the Value of Education for Cultural and Economic Growth (2021-2024);
- Erasmus+ "Empowering Mathematics Education for All" (2024–2026);
- Erasmus+ "Teacher Competences for Sustainable Education" (2022–2024).

These publications and project activities demonstrate that the academic staff are internationally recognized researchers who contribute directly to doctoral students' academic development. Many of the doctoral theses are embedded in the same thematic areas, creating coherence between institutional research priorities and doctoral supervision.

The staff are active in national research programmes such as VPP Education (2023-2026), Letonika for the Development of Latvian and European Society (2021-2024), and IzVeTSKKEI (2021-2024), as well as Erasmus+ projects: INTEC, Empowering Mathematics Education for All, and Teacher Competences for Sustainable Education. These projects provide doctoral candidates with real-world research contexts, access to data, and opportunities for publications.

The teaching staff regularly present at international conferences, such as ECER (European Educational Research Association), AERA, Baltic Education Research Association Conference, and International Conference on Lifelong Learning and Education Development. According to Annex "Statistical data on mobility", 28 academic mobilities were implemented between 2020-2024, mainly for keynote presentations and project dissemination.

The on-site visit confirmed that the doctoral students participate in these research networks, co-publish with their supervisors, and present their preliminary results at annual doctoral seminars organized jointly by all partner universities. Supervisors reported that the interdisciplinary character of the consortium allows for comparative and cross-institutional research projects - an important indicator of a mature research environment.

2.4.4. The SAR Annex "Scientific publications of academic staff" and SAR section 3.4.3. provide solid evidence that all academic staff meet the research activity criteria set in the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Distribution by journal impact category (according to Scopus data, 2024):

18% Q1–Q2 journals, including:

- Sustainability - "Digital Learning Pathways for Inclusive Classrooms: From Theory to Practice" (2023);
- Frontiers in Psychology - "Reflective Professional Development of Teachers in Post-Pandemic Education" (2022);
- Education and Information Technologies - "AI-Supported Learning Analytics for Early-Stage

Research Training" (2023);

- Education Sciences - "Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teacher Competence Development" (2024).

41% Q3-Q4 journals, including:

- Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability - "Education for Sustainable Development in Baltic Higher Education" (2021);

- Pedagogika - "Developing Inclusive Education Practices through Research-Based Teacher Training" (2022);

- Education in the Knowledge Society - "Integrating Digital Pedagogy into Doctoral Supervision" (2023);

- Problems of Education in the 21st Century - "Enhancing Research Literacy in Teacher Education" (2020).

41% national peer-reviewed journals or RTU proceedings, including:

- Proceedings of RTU: Humanities and Social Sciences - "Innovative Didactics and Learning Assessment in Higher Education" (2023);

- Rēzekne Academy of Technologies Proceedings: Society. Integration. Education - multiple peer-reviewed papers (2019–2024);

- Liepāja Academy Research Journal: Education and Pedagogy - "Mentoring Models in Teacher Professional Development" (2022).

In addition, 12 monographs and edited volumes were published:

- "Transformative Digital Learning: Emerging Cases and Considerations" (Rezekne Academy Press, 2021);

- "Professional Growth and Reflective Teaching in Early Childhood and Primary Education" (RTU Press, 2023);

- "Innovations in Teacher Education and Didactics of Higher Education" (Liepāja Academy Press, 2022);

- "Contemporary Challenges in Educational Research: From Policy to Practice" (University of Latvia Press, 2024).

This extensive publication activity demonstrates that the academic staff not only maintain continuous scientific productivity but also contribute significantly to national and international discourse in educational research. The proportion of Q1-Q2 indexed papers (18%) is above the national benchmark of 11%, which evidences a strong international orientation and consistent integration into European research networks. Feedback from the on-site visit further supports these findings. Doctoral students emphasized that most supervisors publish annually, often in collaboration with students, and that co-authorship opportunities significantly enhance research skills, visibility, and employability. The external experts also noted that this publication culture - combining local relevance and international presence represents a significant advancement for doctoral-level education in Latvia, contributing directly to the sustainability and recognition of educational sciences as a research field. Research topics include teacher professional growth, inclusive education, AI-supported learning, and educational leadership. The study programme has also developed an internal peer-review system for supervising publications: all doctoral students' research articles are reviewed by at least one faculty member from another partner institution. This practice ensures consistent research quality and supports doctoral student readiness for dissertation defence. During the on-site visit, employers and external experts highlighted that this publication culture reflects a significant development for Latvian educational research. It bridges theory and practice and fosters an international academic presence.

2.4.5. Collaboration among the teaching staff is multi-layered and deeply institutionalized. As described in SAR section 3.4.5. and confirmed by the on-site visit, cooperation operates on three levels:

- Inter-university cooperation. Supervisors from partner institutions (University of Latvia, Daugavpils University, RTU LA, RTU RA) participate in joint doctoral councils, thematic seminars, and co-supervision teams. Doctoral courses are shared among universities through MS Teams and Zoom hybrid teaching. This structure enables joint supervision and enhances mobility.
- Cross-disciplinary collaboration. Supervisors from educational sciences, psychology, and engineering co-design interdisciplinary research modules. For instance, doctoral seminars on Digital Pedagogy and Learning Analytics (2023) and Inclusive Education in Multicultural Contexts (2024) were conducted jointly by RTU LA and RTU RA.
- International networking. The staff cooperate in the Baltic-Nordic Doctoral School in Education and participate in the European Doctoral Education Council (EUA-CDE).

In addition, the joint doctoral study programme organizes annual Research Week, bringing together doctoral students and faculty from all partner institutions. Feedback from on-site discussions confirmed that these events significantly enhance cohesion and academic identity.

The staff-to-doctoral-student ratio is consistent with European doctoral supervision standards. This ensures personalized mentoring and consistent progress monitoring.

The cooperation between academic staff across RTU LA and RTU RA is a well-structured, systemic, and continuous process ensuring the integrity, consistency, and academic coherence of the study programmes. According to the SAR section 3.4.5. and the on-site discussions, the collaboration mechanisms are built around three key pillars: academic coordination, digital and methodological integration, and joint research and professional development activities.

The cooperation model reflects RTU's strategic priority to strengthen inter-institutional synergy within the merged structure of Liepāja and Rēzekne Academies. It also corresponds to the principles of the ESG 2015.

Each study programme is coordinated by a Programme Council, which includes representatives from both academies, senior lecturers, and student representatives. The Council meets monthly (alternating between on-site and online meetings) to discuss academic planning, course design, assessment alignment, and workload balance.

According to the SAR and the interviews conducted during the on-site visit, cooperation is supported by a unified digital infrastructure. The ORTUS platform serves as the institutional backbone for study documentation, course descriptions, and assessment management. Meanwhile, Moodle provides the shared e-learning environment, where e-courses are jointly created, maintained, and continuously updated by staff from both academies. In addition, MS Teams and Zoom are actively used for communication, virtual meetings, peer review sessions, and cross-academy supervision of students' research work.

These tools also support joint mentoring of new lecturers - a structured mentoring system where newly hired teachers are paired with experienced colleagues from the partner academy for one academic year. Mentoring includes peer observation, co-teaching, and reflection sessions documented in the ORTUS system.

The on-site visit confirmed that this model is functioning effectively and fosters a collegial and supportive environment. Lecturers highlighted that "regular discussions with colleagues from the other academy help maintain consistency in course implementation and evaluation."

Academic cooperation extends beyond teaching. According to the SAR Annexes "Scientific Publications of Academic Staff" and "Statistical Data on Mobility", teaching staff frequently collaborate in research clusters and project consortia. Joint publications appear annually in national and international journals, and collaborative research themes include inclusive education, digital transformation, sustainability in teacher education, and regional development.

In the last three years, more than 20 joint conference papers were presented at the International Conference "Society. Integration. Education" in Rēzekne and the RTU Liepāja Pedagogy Forum. Academic staff from both institutions co-edited two collective monographs: "Teacher Competences

for Sustainable Education” (RTU Press, 2022) and “Inclusive Practices in the Baltic Educational Context” (RTA Press, 2023).

Professional development activities are also aligned between the academies. Staff members participate in RTU’s Centre for Academic Excellence workshops, focusing on academic integrity, digital pedagogy, research methods, and foreign language proficiency. Each year, at least 10-12 staff members participate in Erasmus+ mobility for teaching or training purposes, as evidenced in SAR Annex “Statistical Data on Outgoing and Incoming Mobility of Academic Staff”. Such shared initiatives contribute to a common institutional culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

The cooperation model not only enhances internal academic quality but also strengthens regional impact. RTU LA in Kurzeme and RTU RA in Latgale act as teacher education hubs, addressing the persistent shortage of qualified teachers in Latvia, particularly in STEM and Latvian language education.

By aligning curricula, sharing expertise, and developing joint projects with local municipalities and schools, the two academies ensure the regional relevance of teacher education and contribute to educational equity across Latvia. During the on-site visit, employers and local school representatives emphasized that the collaboration between both academies creates a national network of pedagogical innovation and strengthens the continuity of teacher training in regional contexts.

This regional mission also supports RTU’s broader goal of maintaining teacher education accessibility outside Riga and preventing the concentration of educational expertise solely in the capital.

Overall, the mechanism for mutual cooperation among the teaching staff at RTU LA and RTU RA is structured, functioning, and highly effective. It contributes to the achievement of programme aims, ensures the interconnectedness of study courses, and enhances both academic and regional quality. The cooperation is not merely administrative but academic, resulting in tangible outcomes - joint curricula, publications, methodological materials, and cross-academy mentoring. The model can be considered an example of good practice in joint programme delivery within the Latvian higher education system. It can be concluded that the mechanism of cooperation contributes significantly to programme coherence and national teacher education sustainability.

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

The teaching staff of the Joint Third Cycle (Doctoral) Programme “Educational Sciences” demonstrate outstanding academic competence, research productivity, and supervisory experience. The integration of three universities creates a synergistic environment that ensures high research quality and sustainability. The staff are active internationally, publish regularly, and involve doctoral students in collaborative projects. Mechanisms for staff renewal, mentoring, and workload balance are in place and effective.

However, further development is needed to increase international visibility of publications (particularly Q1-Q2 papers) and to strengthen joint doctoral supervision capacity through structured training in modern research methodologies and academic writing.

Strengths:

1. Highly qualified staff with strong research profiles (89% PhD or higher).
2. Active participation in international research projects and networks.
3. Effective co-supervision and inter-university cooperation mechanisms.
4. Integration of doctoral students into research and publication processes.
5. Regional inclusiveness - study programme connects Western and Eastern Latvia (Kurzeme and Latgale).

Weaknesses:

1. Need for higher proportion of Q1-Q2 publications.
2. Limited international joint publications with doctoral students.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff fully comply with the regulatory and professional standards for doctoral supervision. The qualifications of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the JDSP "Educational Science" comply with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements governing the delivery of the study programme. These qualifications ensure the attainment of the programme's objectives, the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, and the fulfilment of the aims of the respective study courses. Furthermore, the academic staff engage in research activities within the field of educational sciences, thereby evidencing the continuous development of their scientific competence and ensuring that the programme content is aligned with the most recent advancements in the discipline.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

As the study programme is implemented in Latvian and English, the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in both languages - Latvian and English. (see SAR Annex "28.8_Course descriptions_Doktoral study programme_ENG.pdf"), The structure of study course descriptions corresponds to the requirements set in Section 56(1) Paragraph two and to the Section 56(2) Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (see SAR Annex "27.8_Study plan of the joint doctoral study programme.xlsx").

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme (SAR Annex "19.8_Diploma sample_Doctoral programme.docx") complies with the requirements stated in the Law on Higher Education Institutions (e.g., (4) A State-recognised diploma shall utilise the State coat of arms, and the Cabinet shall determine the sample of such diploma). The information included in the Diploma and the Annex appended to the diploma complies with the regulations - Cabinet regulations No. 202 "Kārtība Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus" (<https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256157>).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The 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. (SAR Annex "21.8_Compliance of the joint study programme with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.docx"). Study programme "JDSP "Educational Sciences" - 20 academic staff members from RTU have been involved in the implementation of JDSP "Educational Sciences" from RTU LA (9) and RTU RA (11), all of them - doctors of science (see SAR, p. 154, SAR Annex "27.8_Study plan of the joint doctoral study programme.xlsx", "Confirmation - on compliance of the academic staff.edoc", "List of academic staff_RTU LA_RTU RA.xlsx").

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff qualifications fully comply with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, regarding the classification of scientific disciplines in Latvia. For RTU RA "As of 01.04.2025, out of 11 lecturers, 7 are experts of the Latvian Council of Science of Science. [...] 9 are elected to academic positions at RTU" and for RTU LA "8 lecturers are experts of the Latvian Council of Science of Science. [...] 7 - professors, 2 associate professors at RTU" (out of 9 in total) (see SAR, p. 154, SAR Annex "Confirmation - on compliance of the academic staff of the doctoral study programme.edoc").

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the

study programme complies with the regulations on the state language knowledge and state language proficiency test for professional and official duties. (SAR Annex “Confirmation - knowledge of the state language.edoc”).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff members have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language (SAR Annex “Confirmation - knowledge of the foreign language.edoc”).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study agreement (SAR Annex “Ligums_budzeta_studijam_doktors_LV.pdf”) complies with the mandatory requirements indicated in the Cabinet Regulations No 70 “Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi” (<https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=152072>).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is a confirmation provided by RTU that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in the corresponding study programme Educational Sciences (51142) of the University of Latvia if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. (see SAR Annex “Agreement with the University of Latvia on continuing education (in Latvian).edoc”).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is a confirmation provided by the RTU 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 and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme. (see SAR Annex “Confirmation - on compensation for losses.edoc”).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the requirements prescribed in Section 55, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions: “The joint doctoral programme “Educational Sciences” is implemented in cooperation with the University of Latvia and Daugavpils University” (SAR, p. 24); “modules implemented at several universities.” (SAR, p. 42).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

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

The Joint Third-cycle (Doctoral) Study Programme 'Educational Sciences' (51142) is fully aligned with national and European quality standards for doctoral studies, demonstrating coherence between its title, degree, study code, and regulatory frameworks. The study programme is research-oriented, strategically aligned with higher education reforms, and responsive to expert recommendations, with an appropriate scope (198 ECTS) and duration (3 years) to achieve advanced doctoral-level learning outcomes. Admission requirements, study programme structure, and quality assurance mechanisms are well defined, while economic and social relevance is clearly substantiated. Although graduate employment data is still limited due to the programme's recent implementation, available evidence confirms alignment with the study programme's objectives and international best practices in doctoral education.

Studies in the third cycle (doctoral) study programme take place at the RTU RA, at the RTU LA, at the University of Latvia, and at the Daugavpils University. This kind of strong cooperation is the best solution for the whole country. The resources available to the joint study programme, and the use of funding sources ensure full implementation of the study process.

The number of new students decreased significantly during the last years. It could be considered to open the study programme every second year, to optimize the costs, and to create the synergy between students.

The teaching staff of the Joint third cycle (Doctoral) Study Programme "Educational Sciences" (51142) ensure the study programme's full compliance with national and European quality standards. The joint structure provides a strong research base, promotes interdisciplinary synergy, and sustains Latvia's national capacity for educational science research.

Overall, the study programme is well structured and demonstrates steady progress toward greater internationalisation. Further strengthening strategic alignment around the pursuit of top-level research would enhance its academic impact beyond the current level.

Evaluation of the study programme "Educational Sciences"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Educational Sciences"

Short-term recommendations

1. Increase participation of supervisors in academic writing and methodology courses to boost publication in higher-impact journals.
2. Clarify and strategically divide roles among academic staff, distinguishing between responsibilities for pursuing international excellence and for strengthening local collaboration, recognising that it is neither feasible nor effective for all individuals to contribute equally across all areas simultaneously.
3. The minimum number of students must be set: it could be at least 4, as 4 institutions participate in this programme.

Long-term recommendations

1. It may be reasonable (optimal) to open the study programme every second year: as the number of students is small, resources must be saved in all participating institutions. This may even raise the popularity of the study programme.
2. Expand international co-supervision agreements with EU universities to enhance research visibility.
3. Develop stronger international research hubs and thematic concentrations through a deliberate and strategic institutional approach.

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

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

Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
<p>R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:</p>		<p>Partially compliant</p>	<p>RTU has established a comprehensive internal quality management system aligned with the “Excellence Approach” and “Quality Policy” approved by the Senate in 2017, ensuring continuous improvement through performance indicators and stakeholder feedback. Clear and systematic procedures govern the development, monitoring, and evaluation of study programmes, with different institutional levels actively involved, such as, academies, councils, the Vice-Rector’s Office, Student Parliament, and Senate. Following the consolidation of RTU RA and RTU LA, a unified study field committee now oversees self-evaluations and quality assurance. The institution maintains high standards through well-defined regulations on assessment, final examinations, and academic staff development, supported by the RTU Center for Academic Excellence. Regular student surveys and data analyses contribute to evidence-based decision-making, while performance reviews and Senate-approved methodologies ensure accountability and the ongoing enhancement of study quality. Nevertheless, following the consolidation process, sustained effort and continuous monitoring will remain essential to ensure that the quality assurance system is fully embedded, consistently applied across all units, and further enhanced in response to evolving institutional and external requirements.</p>

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)		Partially compliant	The analysis and evaluation of the Doctoral Study Programme indicate that the university demonstrates strong collaboration with local stakeholders and alumni, complemented by a steadily strengthening international orientation through Erasmus+ activities, EU-funded projects, and active participation in global research networks. While there is clear institutional commitment to innovation and investment in research infrastructure, the research directions within the programme remain fragmented and are frequently driven by individual academic interests rather than by a coherent and strategically coordinated institutional research agenda.
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		Both RTU academies are strong in local and international cooperation, which provides added value to the implementation of the study process and increases the quality of studies.
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	Although both RTU RA and RTU LA have put an effort to implement actions to fulfil the recommendations provided by experts in the previous period of evaluation, there are still some aspects to focus on in the future and put even more effort as they influence the quality greatly, e.g., usage of research environment, international cooperation and continuous raising of English language competency.

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

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Preschool Teacher (41141)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
2	Speech Therapy (42141)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent
3	Teacher (42141)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent
4	Special Education (42141)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent
5	Primary education teacher (42141)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
6	Teacher (44141)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent
7	Educational Sciences (45142)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent
8	Educational Sciences (51142)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts