

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Turība University

Study field: Information and Communication Sciences

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Summary Assessment of the Study Field

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The aim of the study field emphasizes the development of communication and public relations professionals and impact on the economy as a whole, as well as on various specific areas: politics, business, export, both public and private sector. The aim of the study field corresponds to the strategic directions of the higher education institution (hereinafter - HEI). The directions of the study field development strategy correspond to the strategic directions of the HEI including cooperation with foreign universities, cooperation with universities and practitioners in Latvia and abroad. The relevant study programmes comply with the main direction of the strategic development of the HEI, thus the role of the information and communication sciences (hereinafter - ICS) field is not stressed in the development documents, for example, in the Development Strategy of Turība University (<https://www.turiba.lv/en/university/about-us>). There is no reference to major changes or needs in the industry. It is hard to find the direct link with the importance of the field of ICS in the HEI. There is no detailed and expanded analysis on the specifics and uniqueness of the study field in comparison to other study programmes in Latvia and abroad in the self assessment report (hereinafter - SAR). The description included in the SAR does not convince about the topicality and significance of the study field in the national and international level of education in the communication field. The more concrete vision and rationale were obtained in the discussions with Faculty representatives.

Study programmes are implemented in accordance with the professional qualification standards approved by the state. The programmes are designed to correspond to one of the main study fields of the HEI which is business. Learning outcomes of the students are developed following with the professional qualification standards. The programmes are provided in Latvian and English, thus interdisciplinarity programmes including communication and business could lead to internationalization. Different study forms (part time, full time, extramural for part time) are provided.

The Management structure of the study field is well organized and tasks are clear and feasible. The faculty and departments are primarily involved in the implementation of academic work, whereas the Study Department and the rectors' council ensure the implementation of the study process. During the meeting, academic staff and students emphasized support of the administrative and technical staff in the study process, with special emphasis on students oriented education and individual approach.

The content of the study programmes. The goal of the experts is to assess the ICS study field. If only analyzing the study programmes separately, they seem to follow the most significant requirements, thus, possessing sufficient quality. However, the experts' purpose is to be able to see a larger picture and assess the entire study programme portfolio of the aforementioned field. Moreover, the experts' role is to consult and make specific recommendations for the HEI to be stronger and to offer an even higher study quality.

One of the core aspects of study quality is the curriculum. The experts conclude that the two bachelor's programmes have a lot of overlapping content in all groups of subjects. Moreover, the goals, objectives and learning outcomes between the bachelor's and master's "Public Relations" programmes are at question due to: repeating information, which makes it unclear on what the programme aims to achieve. Simultaneously, it is unclear if the programmes fit the bachelor's or master's level more. This should be absolutely obvious and easy to distinguish. Considering this, as well as the decreasing student enrollment, high drop-out rates, the experts suggest rethinking the number of the programmes and their main aims and objectives. The experts state that the alternative could be - one broad bachelor's programme (perhaps with two or three specializations) and two, more specialized, master's programmes. Potentially this should solve the enrollment and drop-out situation.

Overall, when analyzing each programme separately, they seem to be meeting the standard requirements related to the quality of content: the study courses follow the goals, objectives and the learning outcomes of the programme, the study methods are clear, the internships are well thought out, the final thesis topics adhere to the contemporary trends; the feedback is regularly collected and the necessary changes are made. In most programmes students use the opportunity of outgoing mobility. Some of the areas for improvement would be the lack of constructive alignment in the course outlines, lack of more specific assessment methods and criteria, the absence of the incoming mobility.

Research directions of study field cover a broad range of communication sciences subjects and are aligned with the study field and study programmes. Study field has adequate goals in development of applied research. Research is integrated at all study levels in different ways and the teaching staff is highly motivated and instructed to innovate on the programmes based on their research. Study field has adequate goals in terms of increasing scientific production and stimulating measures to increase the involvement of teaching staff in scientific research. Students of all levels are highly involved in scientific research. Study field has clearly defined how students are involved according to the level of studies.

Qualification of teaching staff is adequate and complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programmes and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. Besides academic adequacy of teaching staff, several members of teaching members have solid corporate experience within the study field and study programmes.

Participation in international projects, as well as international mobility of teaching staff is low.

Turība University (hereinafter - TU) has established a well - functioning and structured resource base which successfully complies with the needs of the academic staff and students. They include easy accessibility of the library not only during on site studies but also online remote learning, opportunity for students and staff to participate in mobility programmes, various forms of out of lectures activities as Student Council and Business Incubator. TU as a private HEI has come up with its own strategy of how to attract students to their HEI, although, at some points there are existing unclarities of how TU is operating in questions of research and lecturing balance for the staff as well as on how to attract foreign students specifically to ICS field. What related to study programmes, overall, they are seen as good for research base perspective with one concern that is being seen in doctoral program related to the use of SPSS software.

Cooperation and internationalization. Principles of choosing partners and development of partnership processes both locally and internationally is well established and involves all stakeholder groups and proximity of the labour market, although experts did not find measurable criteria for the above mentioned.

Implementation of the recommendations received during the previous assessment procedures. Recommendations from previous study assessment has been considered and a significant set of reforms has been introduced to improve quality of the studies. However further steps required to strengthen introduced recommendations especially to those parts which were not taken into account and left unjustified.

1. Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1. The aim of the study field emphasizes the development of communication and public relations professionals and impact on the economy as a whole, as well as on various specific areas: politics, business, export, both public and private sector (SAR, page 16).

The uniqueness of the study field in the SAR is not clear. The description included in the SAR does not convince about the topicality and significance of the study field. The more concrete vision and

rationale were obtained in the discussions with Faculty representatives. In the SAR there is no detailed and expanded analysis on the content and specifics of the study field in comparison to other study programmes in Latvia and abroad. The general information is used to describe this point (for example, TU in the field of communication can highlight the dynamic study process, when students are offered practical knowledge and skills, which allows not only to acquire theory, but also to try their hand in the field (SAR, page 16)).

During the meeting with the management and academic staff the collaboration with field professionals from the industry was stressed. It could be considered as the distinguishing feature of the HEI. Regular lectures and guest lectures by professionals are popular practice. The aim of the study field corresponds to the strategic directions of the HEI (SAR, page 17). The directions of the study field development strategy correspond to the strategic directions of the HEI (SAR, page 17), including cooperation with foreign universities, cooperation with universities and practitioners in Latvia and abroad.

The relevant study programmes comply with the main direction of the strategic development of the HEI, thus the role of the ICS field is not stressed in the development documents, for example, in the Development Strategy of Turība University (<https://www.turiba.lv/en/university/about-us>). There is no reference to major changes or needs in the industry. It is hard to find the direct link with the importance of the field of ICS in the HEI.

The role of business is stressed there as a main direction, for example, point 1.1. in the Development Strategy of Turība University TU is a more recognized higher education institution in Latvia, operating in the field of business education, assessed by entrepreneurs and company managers (page 8). For more detailed and broader information about the aim and tasks of this field linked to the TU development strategy was checked also on Development plan for the ICS study field, thus the general information which could be applied for every study field were found – about quality assurance, resource development, sustainability improvement, this makes it difficult to assess the long-term and social and economic impacts of the study field. The specific activities of the field is represented in the section of the improving cooperation, like new tradition started in 2019/2020 – a meeting “Communication field UpDate”, where students of all study courses meet with the lecturers of the field in order to promote the exchange of opinions and the improvement of the study process.

Study programmes are implemented in accordance with the professional qualification standards approved by the state. The programmes are designed to correspond to one of the main study fields of the HEI which is business. Learning outcomes of the students are developed following with the professional qualification standards. The programmes are provided in Latvian and English, thus interdisciplinarity programmes including communication and business could lead to internationalization.

1.2. The Management structure of the study field is well organized and tasks are clear and feasible. The faculty and departments are primarily involved in the implementation of academic work, whereas the Study Department and the rectors' council ensure the implementation of the study process. The functions of the all units are described in the SAR, pages 20-25. For important decisions, such as improvements in the study field and programmes responsible is the council of the Faculty. The organisation and supervision of the field and study programmes are managed by The Council of The Study Fields (Annex 2 of SAR). This Council of the Study Fields include students, employers and faculty.

During the meeting, academic staff and students emphasize support of the administrative and technical staff in the study process, with special emphasis on students oriented education and individual approach. The academic staff emphasized that there are no complaints about the study organization process in support of scientific activity. The important role of the Study Information Center (hereinafter - SIC) in the daily life of students was also emphasized during the meeting. It provides information and services to applicants, stakeholders and students. Both lecturers and

students are involved in decision-making - first they must be informed about the disadvantages and advantages, after they are evaluated in the Study Field Council.

1.3. Procedures and Requirements for the enrollment of students are specified in the Admission Regulations, which is available on the HEI website. It includes information regarding the registration of applicants for studies; the conduct of the competition on study places; the announcement of the results of the competition; the entering into of the study contract and the entry into the list of students. HEI has admission regulations for each level of studies. The requirements for local and foreign students are described and regulated.

The content and scope of study programmes are implemented based on the previous studies/education level. The education previously acquired by the person complies with the requirements for admission in the relevant study programme. The results of studies achieved in professional experience are described (SAR, page 27). The Regulations regarding the procedures for the recognition of the results of studies achieved in previous education or professional experience are available on the HEI webpage.

The procedure of examinations and assessment is determined by the Study Regulations. During the acquisition of each study course, the student must pass the regular examinations of the study course (tests, reports, etc.) specified in the description of the study course. At the end of the study course, the student completes the final examinations of the study course - exam or receives a test. The lecturer of the study course may develop his / her own criteria in accordance with the study results expected in the acquisition of the course, using the general evaluation criteria included in the study regulations as a basis. The general criteria for a 10-grade system is common for HEI (SAR, page 28).

1.4. One of the tools for discovering plagiarism, is the unified computerized plagiarism control system (VDPKS), which was created jointly by Latvian HEIs, in which student papers can be compared with student papers and thesis developed by other Latvian HEIs, as well as documents found on the web. In addition the Turnitin system is used. There are also developed procedures in the cases if students are not allowed to defend their work or if students are not satisfied with the assessment obtained.

1.5. HEI provides necessary information about the study programmes on the website, it corresponds to the official information registers. Prospective students can read the essential requirements and the description of study programmes in Latvian, Russian and English. TU has set publicity (presenting positive success stories (at least 5 activities per month, providing 15 to 20 publications) in the mass media as one of its priorities (TU strategy, page 10), as well as promoting awareness through a network of mentors. TU has a Turība Mentors Association with a growing number of active mentors, representing all areas where it is possible to get an education in TU.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

The management of the study programme is effectively and successfully ensured, taking into account developed directional monitoring and quality control system involving HEIs employees, students, academic staff and industry professionals.

HEI is taking care of its publicity activities, for example, interviews of students and academic staff in the mass media.

The procedure of the applicants enrollment is clearly described.

Strengths:

Well structured decision taking system and management of the study field.

Development of professional skills of students in cooperation with employers.

Well developed publicity strategy.

Weaknesses:

Lack of clear development strategy of this study field, its place and the impact on social and economic trends.

2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

2.1. According to SAR, Part I, 1.3., TU internal documents fully describe the quality assurance mechanisms. All of the internal documents are available for access and are both in Latvian and English. TU also has a Quality Management Manual approved by the Senate. Its goal is the common understanding of the institutional quality standards. This manual adheres to the national and international requirements, and lists the basic principles. Via various documents, related to the quality assurance, TU strives through them to achieve effectiveness of the performance and satisfaction of all stakeholders. The quality manager (the Chairman of the Management Board) is responsible for the relevant processes of quality management. The Rector and Vice-Rectors are responsible for the pedagogical and scientific aspects at the institution. The Dean is responsible for the overall aspects related to the study programme portfolio. The Vice-Dean manages the implementation of the study process. Moreover, the programme directors and the heads of the departments are responsible for the particular study programmes and the improvement of the study processes. The TU branch managers are responsible for the implementation of the programmes in the branches. Overall, each TU employee is responsible for the implementation of the quality in their own activities. Internal audits are conducted in order to monitor the quality assurance. Lecturers' qualification development is implemented. The quality system complies with the standards and guidelines of the European Association for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and TU has set the specific measures to monitor quality assurance. Regular improvements related to study quality assurance are implemented. The following documents define the quality assurance: Quality Policy, Quality Management Guide. TU provides the essential performance evaluation criteria: student satisfaction, employer references, graduate profile, accreditation, enrollment / graduation rates, and financial indicators. Overall, the internal quality assurance system of TU seems to comply with the provisions of Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education as justified in SAR, Part I, 1.4.

Meanwhile, the internal quality assurance follows a very systematic approach, holds everyone accountable for the quality assurance at TU, engages all of the necessary parties, e.g.: academic and non-academic staff, students, representatives of the labor market, alumni, etc. The study programmes, their goals, objectives, learning outcomes are constantly renewed and developed based on the conditions of the labor market and societal environment, as well as based on the needs and expectations of the learning generations. Students are very active in study development and quality assurance processes. TU implements a complex approach for the internal quality assurance by approaching it from the necessary aspects: management, implementation, continuous development, gathering of feedback, provision of necessary resources, dissemination of information, etc. A systemic and complex approach is used to collect feedback and gather the necessary data and information, based on which further decisions are made.

One of the core aspects of study quality is the curriculum. The experts conclude that the two bachelor's programmes have a lot of overlapping content. Moreover, the goals, objectives and learning outcomes between the bachelor's and master's "Public Relations" programmes are at question due to: repeating information, which makes it unclear on what the programme aims to achieve. Perhaps a clearer separation should be made when setting goals for the programmes, simultaneously following the professional standards. Currently, it may seem unclear if the programmes fit the bachelor's or master's level more. This should be absolutely obvious and easy to distinguish. Considering this, as well as the decreasing student enrollment, high drop-out rates, the

experts suggest rethinking the number of the programmes (rethinking the study programme portfolio of the ICS study field) and their main aims and objectives. The experts state that the alternative could be - one broad bachelor's programme (perhaps with introductory specializations) and two, more specialized, master's programmes.

2.2. In SAR, Part II, 2.2., TU provides very specific examples on the renewal of the study programmes by listing the new names of the courses or by showing how some courses were moved to different semesters to maintain the logics of the programmes. Very precise processes for offering the development and implementation of the new study programme, as well as for changing the existing programme or for closing the programme, are provided, and they seem very clear, logical, well substantiated and structured. Feedback is carefully and regularly obtained from the students and the graduates by the Development Department, the results are analyzed and provided to the necessary stakeholders for further development of the programmes. The employers are also included in feedback collection, provision, and its usage to develop programmes as well as to strengthen the study quality assurance. Adequate documents support the necessary processes. TU maintains a very structured system on collecting and managing complaints and proposals. They are collected, registered, worked on, and used for further development, in a very timely, coherent, and logical way. There are specific responsible staff members who work with the received oral or written information, which is sent to the adequate person in charge. The results of the collected complaints and proposals are provided to the necessary individuals, so that they can further make sure in the future that necessary actions have been taken.

Upon the visit it was made clear that students are satisfied with such areas as the application of theory in practice, the guest lecturers and student centered learning. However, during the visit with the students, they mentioned that separation of the courses in the bachelor's programme and making them more unique by targeting the programme goals and objectives, would be something that they'd see in the programme. It is also good that the Student Council (hereinafter - SC) conducts its own questionnaires.

During the visit the employers stated that they'd expect more media literacy content, digital marketing, and similar. They also think that the internships should be longer.

Moreover, during the visit the students claimed that they liked how competent the teachers were, many students mentioned that studying helped them to step out from their comfort zones, they loved excursions and other aspects related to the professional experience.

In addition, the graduates mentioned that they were invited to provide feedback during strategic planning and management sessions. They also mentioned that they return back to the HEI as guest speakers, as well as that they give interviews.

The experts suggest putting more emphasis on the data based decision making processes.

2.3. Statistics are compiled in accordance with the Personal Data Processing Policy. Other data, such as on student achievement, internships, final theses are collected and used for further development of study courses, the renewal of the study programmes. Overall, as mentioned by SAR, Part II, TU collects regular feedback from the necessary stakeholders, in order to implement necessary changes.

As per the provided information (SAR and Annexes, e.g., student statistics), it is clear that student enrollment numbers are gradually decreasing, while the drop-out is high. While external reasons may condition the enrollment, TU should be making very precise conclusions, decisions and formulating clear, detailed strategies to tackle this. One area could be the marketing and internationalization strategy. During the visit it was still not clear how the HEI plans to proceed with this. No marketing finances are allocated for information dissemination, advertising, agents, etc. Internationalization strategy is also not clear. The experts were informed that all programmes are marketed together. It is unclear how potential students realize their uniqueness. The student numbers should be an economic challenge to the HEI. In addition, it may also be a risk to study quality (e.g., limited study and assessment methods can be used with very small groups of

students).

2.4. As it relates to Part 1 of the ESG (European Standards and Guidelines), according to SAR, Part II, 2.5. TU pays special attention to the Quality assurance policy, the Programme development and approval, Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment, Student matriculation, course of study, recognition and certification of qualifications, Quality of the Teaching staff, Learning resources and support for students, Information management, Informing the public, Monitoring and regular checking of programmes. All of the mentioned aspects are well described, implemented, monitored, developed. TU considers Cyclical external quality assurance to be a challenge due to the necessary funding. All of the aforementioned aspects are supported with the necessary documentation, regulations.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

The SAR provides the correct information as it relates to the Internal Quality Assurance system at TU, the review of the programmes, the collection of the statistical data and adherence to the ESG Part 1. All of the information is adequate, the experts believe that more of it should be put into practice in the everyday activities of the HEI.

One of the core aspects of study quality is the curriculum. The experts conclude that the two bachelor's programmes have a lot of overlapping content. Moreover, the goals, objectives and learning outcomes between the bachelor's and master's "Public Relations" programmes are at question due to: repeating information, which makes it unclear on what the programme aims to achieve. In addition, it is unclear if the programme fits the bachelor's or master's level more. This should be absolutely obvious and easy to distinguish. Considering this, the decreasing student enrollment, high drop-out rates, the experts suggest rethinking the number of the programmes and their main aims and objectives. The experts state that the alternative could be - one broad bachelor's programme (perhaps with introductory specializations) and two, more specialized, master's programmes. The continuation of the students to study in the master's programme should ensure higher numbers of students.

Strengths:

A clear, logical, structured internal quality assurance system is implemented.

All of the necessary aspects are supported with relevant documentation, regulations.

The institution includes all of the stakeholders in the internal quality assurance. Each member is responsible for the quality at TU.

All of the necessary information is available either publicly on the TU's website or on the intranet.

Strong relations with the graduates.

Weaknesses

No strategy on managing the decreasing number of student enrollment and high drop-out rates.

No clear marketing strategy of the individual programmes.

Content of the study field - the two bachelor's programmes have a lot of overlapping content. The bachelor's and master's "Public Relations" programmes have similar goals and objectives.

Despite the fact that the SAR mentions that the HEI regularly collects necessary statistical data, it does not seem that appropriate decisions are made based on the results of the collected data.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

3.1. According to SAR (pages 43-44) TU has developed a system to determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study field and the relevant study programmes. TU

uses only private resources to provide studies. TU financial position is considered as stable. The financing plan is determined by the budget for each year. Revenue consists of tuition fees in the TU, participation fees in seminars, hotel services and other operating income. In proportion to the revenues, expenditure is planned in the budget, the main items of which are staff remuneration, social security charges, room maintenance expenses and public charges, material costs of the training process, the purchase of new equipment, as well as the refurbishment and repairs of premises.

They are promoting their study programmes especially concentrating on markets in Eastern Europe, Asia, although interested in other areas as well as Central Europe and Western countries - the United States. They are using various internet portals to ensure such activities. In Western Europe and Asia the marketing for education differs from the existing in Latvia so it is necessary to adjust to these conditions and implement different marketing strategies for student attraction. It is rather hard for them to attract students as in these areas home universities are quite extensive competitors. To ICS study programmes they have managed to attract students from India, Uzbekistan with the use of webinars, presentations. Although, it has to be noted that they are promoting the HEI as such not specific study fields or programmes separately. They are operating within the limitations of the accessible financial resources as indicated by the HEI management during the on site visit.

Tuition fees for the study programmes differ within the range of 10%. The languages in which the study programmes are implemented are Latvian and English.

TU as a private institution is working on alternatives for students to receive scholarships, stipends and study discounts as financial support and motivation for students to study at TU with additional help not only their private resources. There is one fully covered TU scholarship and discounts related to alumni's relations, studying together with family members, basing on recommendations and others which vary in the percentage of coverage in each particular case.

What is related to the funding of scientific research or artistic creation, such a system has been established. It is mostly based on TU funding, as well as individual projects involving TU or individual lecturers. The most important purposes and actions in which the funding is used and needed are for translation purposes, participation in conferences and publishing of various kinds of papers as conference papers. TU is aiming at making research while having quite a small number of students in some of the study programmes. TU income and expenses for each study field are evaluated separately but the budget for the HEI as such is one. TU is well aware that in some of the years for some specific study programmes the year ends with a minus sign which they see as normal as for some other programmes they have larger numbers of students in other study fields. They also participate in scientific projects for which the funding is not taken out of the HEI budget but is being provided by the government funding, for example, that ensures some level of scientific research activities.

3.2. According to SAR (pages 45-46) TU has identified the infrastructure resources and the material and technical provision required for the implementation of the study field, and they are available for the HEI as new conference rooms, audiences, computer classes, a modern library with a wide reading room, computerized workplaces for study purposes, multimedia projectors. For study needs, students are allowed to use all of the TU premises and the equipment is accessible when needed. There is also a specifically designed auditorium in place that is being used for special training in which students can improve their practical skills as simulations of press conferences. One of the greatest strengths of the TU research provision base is the BATIS system that provides easy access to all the necessary information for both academic staff and students.

One of the main concerns related to resource provision for practical purposes of ICS study field is the fact that there was previously an existing media studio where students could gain practical knowledge in working with various equipment as video and audio tools but currently it is not existing which raises a benefit of doubt whether gaining practical skills only through internship experiences is enough.

The students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources. Students are provided with free access to both the library and other resources at the time available to students of all departments. There are also a number of databases which are particularly important bases of resources during Covid-19 time. TU subscribes to online electronic databases LETA, Nozare.lv., Letonika, Lursoft, Scopus, ScienceDirect, EBSCO Academic Search Complete, EBSCO eBooks Academic SubscriptionCollection, EBSCO Business Source Complete, which are accessible to students at the library as well as remotely logging within the environment. Overall, the TU has accessible 42 various databases for student daily use. Although, it is important to note that students have the ability to receive the books from the library during the Covid-19 situation as well. It is crucial for the study process to have the provision of all the necessary resources, especially for those who are writing their Bachelor or Master thesis. For the online lectures the HEI is using WebEx as the main platform for ensuring online lectures.

According to the information provided within the meeting with HEI management, the HEI has made a lot of investment currently and the recent ones were related to computers and technologies at the premises at the TU. They are paying strong attention to digitalisation processes and they try to follow the existing trends and implement them within the HEI.

There is a common system and procedures for the improvement and purchase of the material, technical, methodological, and informative provision in place. Library regularly buys new literature, as in printed and electronic format for the purpose of constantly improving the accessible materials for better study process and quality and updated studies.

Since the study year of 2018/19, TU has implemented an environment for the development of all the necessary environments for e-studies and has consultant for this which is now a crucial ingredient of a successful distance learning environment provision.

TU library offers students a modern automated free access library with an electronic subscription/registration system as well as access to books and periodicals using the electronic catalogue ALISE. The library subscribes to periodicals in print and electronic form. The library resources are mostly in Latvian, Russian, English and German.

TU invests annually in supplementing the library's information resources both for purchasing literature and subscribing to electronic databases. Suggestions about the need to supplement information resources can be made by programme directors, department heads, deans.

3.3. TU has developed and it implements and complies with the procedures for attracting highly skilled teaching staff for the study field and the relevant study programmes. There is an established system in place to attract the experts of the field as teaching staff within the TU. Faculty lecturers are considered to be professionals and experts of the field of communication, project managers at Latvian and international levels who provide not only theoretical knowledge but also provide transparent but in-depth information, based on practical examples and seminars, preparing students to deal with practical tasks in different life situations. One of the examples is already previously mentioned simulation of press conferences, acting, improvisation which are all activities part of special training of students in the TU Training Corps.

TU has a plan in developing the field as digital communication is seen as the future of the communication field so as the financial investment is to be needed in order to educate the students and prepare them for the new, constantly developing work market.

Vacant positions of academic staff in TU departments are appointed by the Rector on the proposal of the Dean of the Faculty, the Director of the study programme or the head of the department. The competition for vacant posts of the academic staff is open to applicants whose education and professional experience complies with the requirements specified in the Law on Higher Education and in the description of the positions of TU.

TU has a hospitation procedure established according to faculty for the purpose of controlling the quality of the lectures provided to the students within the remote learning process. They control the procedure of online lectures very strictly. They have to do it once in a semester. They also have a

qualification plan for every six years. Science plan - individual activities of teaching staff monitored by the administration for each of the lecturers separately and whether they do it and how. TU has increased thus the budget for science. They invest resources in organising seminars, conferences. In each study year TU twice launches a contest for vacancies for academic positions.

In the meeting with the academic staff experts noticed that there is no common answer from all the members as their workload and number of lectures differ which raises a concern of the overall situation because it cannot be analyzed on two or three individual experiences and draw an overall conclusion. One of the lecturers mentioned that for her the division is 30% of research and 70% lectures. Expert's team learned from the meeting of directors of study programmes that the academic and research workload balance of the teaching staff is mostly based on individual time management. TU is supportive of academic staff in participation in conferences, training on how to do the research, strict quality criteria of conducting research. It stimulates the teaching staff to continuously participate in research activities. Students appreciate that not only theory is provided but also practical skills from actual field professionals. TU's directors of study programmes stated that the best indicator of study quality is the student feedback and it is only positive.

The needs of the teaching staff for professional and didactic improvement are identified in a target-oriented manner. Appropriate improvement measures are undertaken, and the outcome and efficiency of the implemented measures are assessed. TU offers academic staff support on how to teach online as right now all the lecturers are taking place remotely, to broaden their English language level the staff is provided some support, online lectures on how to provide pedagogical support for students, support for publishing. Lecturers/ academic staff all pointed out that it is highly appreciated and encouraged from the TU side for the staff to publish articles and participate in research projects as it makes a sufficient part of academic life.

The teaching staff members take part both in mobility programmes as Erasmus + in order to expand their knowledge and improve their skills. According to SAR (p. 52) it is not always possible for the teaching staff to use the opportunities of the Erasmus + mobility programme, because it is quite difficult to coordinate the study courses to be taught at that time and Covid-19 also has made its impact on the possibilities of going abroad on mobility programmes. During the on site visit and asking academic staff, 4 out of 11 members of the staff in the last years have participated in a mobility programme. Overall, TU sees mobility as a great way of developing the skills of the lecturers which brings added value to the implementation of the study process and the study quality.

3.4. TU has identified the support necessary for the students and established a well-functioning support system, based on the needs of the students.

The two main direct available TU support is the Student Council and the Business Incubator. The SC has many functions in relation to the support provided for the students of the HEI. SC not only represents the students but also explores the needs, interests and desires of students to improve the academic process and to make proposals to implement these improvements.

Support for students is also provided by the Study Information Center, advising on the conclusion of agreements, continuation of studies, termination, change of study form. Support for students from abroad, including psychological, is provided by the International Cooperation Department.

Business Incubator provides students with various forms of possibilities and services which enables use of specific opportunities. It provides students with an opportunity to establish their own company that is being registered under the address of the HEI, use the rooms for organizing actual events, renting them or just use the premises as a working place and use the available equipment for students needs.

The SC receives funding from the HEI for various purposes needed. TU has a rather well - functioning SC which is involved in the processes of the HEI and promotes new ideas. Now, they had to adjust to work remotely as well and the TU administration is very happy that they have not stopped to be proactive and organize events online as new student government elections.

For the purpose of improving the quality of studies and engaging students more in the feedback provision process, a new event has been organized called "UpDate". The event is organized as a discussion with the participation of administration, students and teaching staff for the purpose to analyze from the students' point of view, their opinions and suggestions are heard regarding study process and its quality.

If needed students are also provided moral or psychological support as well as individual assistance when it comes to the study process as some of the students may leave the studies taking a gap year with doubts coming back and then the administration discuss such questions personally with each of the students.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

Overall, TU has tried to comply with the existing criteria which is necessary for fully compliant and successful study implementation and provision when it comes to resources. Although, there are some aspects that can be advised to be improved in order to have an even better resource base for students especially when it comes to various kinds of practical knowledge gained within the study process at TU. It is a concern raised by the experts not indicated by students as they outline that they receive practical skills seemingly in good level for them. So it is less of a weakness but more of a recommendation to think of in the longer timeframe for an even better study process as establishing a media studio with all the necessary equipment. TU as a private HEI has come up with its own strategy of how to attract students to their HEI but the concern is whether the strategy should differ for each of the study fields as they are a business HEI and ICS field at some aspects feel as secondary and does not receive that much of attention in the question of resources. One of the greatest benefits is that the HEI has established a well - functioning support system for students and they truly feel taken care of and heard from the administration's side. Mobility programmes are available and both academic staff and students are encouraged to participate in them. It is necessary to also raise more clarity when it comes to research opportunities and the balance of the lectures and conducting research because it stays rather ambiguous and not clear of the overall situation within the HEI on this aspect.

Strengths:

Supportive administration towards students.

TU is constantly working on developing its resources as study materials, library books and databases available for students for more advanced and updated study materials.

Constantly working on digitalisation and upgrading technological tools of HEI.

Investing in organizing educational activities as seminars and conferences that are beneficial for both academic staff and students to develop their skills and gain new insights and knowledge.

Active Students Council and student life.

Provision of Erasmus + mobility programmes for both students and lecturers for development purposes and academic growth.

Available discounts, stipends and scholarships for students so that they should not cover all study fees fully themselves. They are not provided for all but according to specific circumstances in place.

Psychological support system is in place.

Open - minded and forthcoming teaching staff and administration.

Weaknesses

Problems attracting foreign students to this study field.

4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

4.1. As shown in SAR (p.56 and Annex 6), research directions of study field and research topics of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study field cover a broad range of communication sciences and are aligned with the study field and study programmes and are relevant to the industry.

Relevance to industry and academic development of study field scientific research is crucial as TU aims to create new knowledge and apply it in solving problems important to the Latvian economy and society, as well as support the successful development of the Latvian state, economy and society (SAR, p.55).

Development strategy of TU states as one of its main objectives in terms of research to ensure a close link between business and applied science through topical and meaningful research. The Dean of Faculty of Business Administration in meeting with members of the group responsible for the preparation of Self-Assessment report and the person responsible for Quality Assurance at the study field/ faculty provided examples of applied research. According to the study field director it is expected to develop at least one applied research per year in cooperation with industry.

The doctoral study programme "Communication Management" encompasses a relevant contribution to study field research purposes, as students are expected to make relevant research and publications in the communication field as well as develop applied research and TU has good mechanisms to stimulate this. For instance, in order to stimulate more research, TU strategy 2020-2025 establishes that 100% profit of scientific activity is to be reinvested in science. Aims that financing of scientific activities from external sources reaches at least 50% of the total science budget.

4.2. Scientific research topics are aligned with the study field and research processes and mechanisms are well linked with the study process and complement each other. Research is integrated at all study levels in different ways and teaching staff is highly motivated and instructed to innovate on the programmes based on their research.

4.3. Although ensured, international cooperation must be improved. There is still a considerable number of lecturers with no relevant participation in international projects nor with international publications as confirmed by SAR (p.58 and Annex 3). International mobility also should be stimulated as statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of teaching staff during the reporting period (SAR, Annex 3) shows low dynamics in international mobility, specially in inbound where in 3 of the 6 years regarding the reporting period there was no incoming mobility.

Despite the need of improvement there are examples of good practices like the participation of communication students in an international summer school (SAR, p.58). Also cooperation with Vilnius University and Uppsala University are a good practice to position the study field at an international level.

The TU Scientific journal "Acta Prosperitatis", publishes in the fields of tourism, communication, business, law and other matters of the field of social sciences and is indexed in EBSCO database. TU Strategy 2020-2025 aims at the indexation of the journal in the database of Web of Science. This is expected to have a big impact on international goals and cooperation.

4.4. There is a clear effort from TU to support and stimulate research and involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research and/or artistic creation. TU finances the publication of several scientific monographs, as well as participation in conferences, presenting scientific research corresponding to the level of international citation (SAR, p.59). Lecturers' research is stimulated in accordance with the task set - to conduct professional practice- based research in the field of media and communication (SAR, p.59). Study field has adequate goals in terms of increasing scientific production and stimulating measures to increase the involvement of teaching staff in scientific research.

4.5. Students of all levels are highly involved in scientific research as confirmed in their testimonials during site visit. Study field has clearly defined how students should be involved according to the level of studies (SAR, p.62) going from attending conferences as study papers at a bachelor level to the doctoral level where students are expected to develop independent research papers and present them at international conferences, as well as, publish the results of their research, together with the supervisor, in indexed databases such as SCOPUS and the Web of Science. The European Social Fund project “Reinforcing the academic staff of Turība University in areas of strategic specialisation” (project No 8.2.2.0/18/A/019) is a very good practise for funding and stimulating the involvement of doctoral students in research.

4.6. Innovative solutions are stimulated along the study process. Those solutions occur in several dimensions that go from seminars to stimulate the use of new methods in daily work to digital solutions like an APP (SAR, p.63). The new challenges imposed by the Covid-19 are leading TU to accelerate some innovations for online classes and support for students and TU is giving adequate support for students and teachers to take the most out of this new reality. In site visit, students and teachers confirmed and highlighted TU’s focus on the development of innovative and efficient approach to the study process.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

Scientific research is conducted successfully, results are integrated into the study process. TU has good mechanisms to promote involvement of teaching staff and students in the study process. Internationalization of research should increase.

Strengths:

Support from TU to increase and stimulate research.

Very good mechanism to involve students of all levels in scientific research.

Good focus on the development of innovative solutions.

Weaknesses

Research at an international level is low.

Low number of scientific papers in international journals.

Low researchers international mobility.

Lack of clarity when it comes to research and lectures/ teaching balance.

5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

5.1. According to the SAR chapter nr. 5. Cooperation and Internationalisation, TU signed cooperation agreements with Latvian and foreign higher education institutions, employers and employers’ organisations, all together 53 organizations (Annex 7, SAR). The cooperation gives opportunities for students to go on study visits, invite guest lecturers, provide internships etc., including regular meetings between the Faculty Council and employers, thus maintaining high levels of study programmes, and keeping those up to date with trends of labor market requirements.

However it must be admitted that list of provided partners should be considered as slightly outdated - just 6 out of 53 stated partner organizations have been added to this list during the last 5 years, others have been listed from 2002 – 2016 and several mentioned organizations even do not exist anymore.

Also, neither SAR, nor discussions with TU management, study fields director, academic staff and employers did not prove existence of measurable criteria on decision making and choosing appropriate partner organizations. It should be noted that only one foreign institution – Vilnius

University - is listed as an international partner organization, although SAR (p.58; p.69) also mentions partnership with Uppsala University.

5.2. SAR states that The guidelines for the development strategy of the study field are derived from expert advice, labour market requirements, advice from Counsels of the Faculty of Communications, industry professionals and students. The strategic development directions are in line with the development strategy of the HEI thus principles and mechanisms have been set by TU.

However, according to Annex 8 of SAR, Statistical data on foreign students and teaching staff shows that, during the last 7 years (2013 – 2020) there are only 4 lectures delivered by guest professors. Also, According to Annex 9 of SAR, Statistical data on student mobility, there are sufficient number of incoming students in “International Communication Management” programme (107 during last 6 years), but very few in other programmes – none in the last 3 years as well as none at all in Doctoral programme “Communication management”.

5.3. According to SAR 5.3. and Annex 10, there are Practice regulations approved by Senate of TU which regulate procedures of setting up practices. It has been proved also during discussions with TU students and graduates, that TU provides significant help for students in order to find appropriate internship locations within the list of stated partners.

5.4. According to SAR 5.4., TU has signed several bilateral cooperation contracts with universities in Europe, Asia and South America in order to implement cooperation within Erasmus + framework. However, despite the fact that cooperation agreement with one partner – Faculty of Communication of Vilnius University of Lithuania - has been signed 5 years ago in 2016, there are only plans for creating a joint study programme and experts did not receive proof of development for the above mentioned.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

All necessary documentation has been drafted to describe principles of choosing partners and development of partnership process in general. Measurement and effectiveness of the process is based on internal discussions within Faculty Council as well as among Faculty Council, UVF management and study field lecturers, thus considered by the above mentioned as effective due to involvement of all stakeholders and proximity of the labour market. However, there are no measurable criteria set for choosing local and international partners as might be necessary in order to make clear the process and ensure further sustainability of partnership system between TU and its stakeholders.

Strengths:

Strong support by TU management in finding internships for students within an established partnership network.

Well-developed and mutually supportive cooperation between students, graduates and employers.

International environment of studies within professional bachelor’s study programme “International Communication management”, especially in direction of incoming mobility.

Weaknesses

Lack of measurable criteria on which selection of local and international partners is based.

Insufficient international partnership networks with measurable results, e.g. only one foreign institution has been mentioned as a partner for creation of joint study programmes.

Low level of incoming and outgoing mobility of teaching staff as well as lack of student mobility in Doctoral programme “Communication Management”.

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

Analysis

During the previous accreditation of the study field consisted of the following expert recommendations:

- 1) Didactic logic (from simple to complex) should be taken into account when creating the programme.
- 2) The problem with the misleading names of bachelor's and doctorate programmes needs to be resolved.
- 3) Study courses and research methods should be implemented and improved in all study programmes, at all levels.
- 4) Gender equality policy needs to be carefully evaluated.

According to SAR (Annex 12) two (No. 1 and 3) out of four recommendations have been fully implemented, one – partially (No. 2) and one (No. 4) has not been considered. Overall, to achieve recommended results, significant activities have been executed, to mention, the names and content of the study courses have been changed in accordance with the latest industry trends, new courses have been introduced, thus quality of education has been improved.

Also, TU key personnel have been changed, including Vice-Dean and the Head of Department of Communication Sciences, thus increasing better connection between the study programme and the labour market. According to SAR (page 70) also there was significant improvement in technical support for the study process, including the possibility to conduct lectures on-line which is crucial especially for students of “International Communication Management” courses where a significant number of students are from abroad. During the experts' visit at TU premises, it was proved that availability of online study content for students and teaching staff complies with highest standards and helps to ease and improve both study and teaching process.

In order to improve student's motivation, thus also possibly reducing dropouts, a more understandable and motivating evaluation principle has been introduced, called a model. The principle suggests summing up all student's performances as a percentage thus mirroring overall results of study activities together not only as separate courses.

The recommendation No. 2 – “The problem with misleading names of bachelor's and doctorate programs needs to be resolved”, according to SAR (Annex 12) has been considered as partially implemented, must be understood that description of programmes already been rewritten, clarified and more detailed information has been added, thus better positioned in the education market.

According to SAR previous recommendation No. 4 “Gender equality policy needs to be carefully evaluated”, has not even been considered, because TU did not find any justification of the issue.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

As relates to recommendations from previous study assessment, experts found that a significant set of reforms has been introduced to improve quality of the studies. However further steps required to strengthen introduced recommendations.

Strengths:

TU has evaluated previous recommendations seriously and made significant changes regarding the content of studies and qualities of leading personnel.

Technical support of studies has been significantly improved taking into consideration the situation with Covid-19 pandemic as well as the necessity of additional study material, including online availability of textbooks and other study material.

As noteworthy experts considered the introduction of a more motivating principle of study evaluation, including the weight of tests and exam as percentage summing final result as all sets of performed activities.

Weaknesses

Recommendation regarding gender equality policy should not be ignored and, as minimum, should be justified.

7. Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: According to SAR, Part I, 1.3. and as per the experts' visit HEI ensures improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Information provided in SAR, Part I, 1.3., confirms that TU has established a policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education. Based on it the following documents are in place: Quality policy; Quality management manual; Faculty Regulations; Hospitality procedure; Survey procedure.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The SAR, Part I, 1.3, introduces the Regulations for the Development, Approval and Change of Study Programs; Process measurement system included in the Quality Management System Manual, which prove that the TU formally has the mechanism.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The TU utilizes the Study regulations; Examination regulations; State examination regulations in relevant processes.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: According to the SAR, Part I, 1.3, the TU has developed the internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality. This is detected in the Hospitality procedure; Survey procedure; Process measurement system included in the Quality Management System Manual.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Formally, the TU ensures the collection of necessary information through the Process measurement system included in the Quality Management System Manual; through the Survey procedure, questionnaire. During the visit it was noted that analysis is made of the collected data and decisions are made based on that.

- 7 1.6. The higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their quality assurance systems.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: The continuous improvement of the study field by ensuring the quality is detected in the TU strategy and the Quality assurance documents display this intention.
- 8 R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: Cooperation agreements with several local and foreign partner institutions signed and exist.
- 9 R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: The study field shows clear evidences of increasing focus on research (SAR, Annex 6) and mechanisms for the involvement of students and the teaching staff in scientific research are adequate. The teaching staff profile is aligned with the study field scope.
- 10 R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.
Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant
Justification: All major shortcomings and deficiencies stated in previous assessment process have been addressed, except one, regarding gender equality policy which should be justified.

8. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

1. Define the goals and objectives of the applied science as it is mentioned as an important output of the students papers (SAR, page 57). Develop a specific action plan for the development of applied research, indicating which areas studies will be carried.
2. Better positioning of the study field is needed to prove its uniqueness and differences from competitors, including provision of statistical data about benefits and gains which differ studies at TU from other HEIs, it could be defined in the website and in the Development plan or strategy of the Study field. Define more clearly specifics and role of this study field in the HEI as well. Apart from the professional standards, it should highlight the specificities for the Latvian market.
3. Define more clearly which groups of society and how will benefit from this field of study in the Strategy of the study field.
4. Market the programmes separately as separate products.
5. Increase the participation in international projects.
6. Increase the number of international publications.
7. Increase researchers international mobility.
8. Introduce measurable criteria for choosing local and international partners.
9. Justify why previous recommendation on gender equality was not taken into account.

Long-term recommendations

1. Consider consolidating the ICS study field study programme portfolio - have one broad bachelor's programme and two more specialized master's programmes.
2. An interdisciplinary programme including communication and business, may be an idea to attract more students.
3. Long-term decisions should be made, based on the results of the collected data.
4. Establishing a media studio for practical task implementation in actual work circumstances as well as for the purpose of student initiatives as founding students media or other activities.

II. "International Communication Management" ASSESSMENT

II. "International Communication Management" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The "International Communication Management" programme is a study programme in Latvia, which has been implemented in Latvian and English since the 2010/2011 study year. Latvian citizens also choose to study in the study programme in English and this is stressed as an uniqueness of this study programme in the SAR, page 98. Degree to be acquired is Professional Bachelor's Degree in Communication Management.

The study programme complies with the professional standard (approved in 2020, International Communication Manager is a specialization for the profession of Public Relations Manager), the standard:

https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/prof_kval_pamatprasibas/2017/PKP-069.pdf as well as with the Regulation of Cabinet of Ministers No. 512 of 26 August 2014, Regulations on the national standard for second level professional higher education. It corresponds to 160 CP (240 ECTS) for this level of studies. The volume of study courses in the study programme corresponds to the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No.512.

The studies are provided in the different forms - full time, part time and part time extramural in Latvian and full time studies in English.

The admissions requirements for studies in Latvian requires that applicants must have passed the centralized exam in Latvian, a foreign language (English, German, French or Russian) and Mathematics. Applicants who have completed upper secondary education before 2004 must have passed a grade in the relevant subjects. For the studies in English the applicant must have completed secondary education, and has to provide one of the English language certificates. If the applicant does not have any of the respective English language certificates, however the medium of instruction of his/her secondary education was English, he/she will receive a link to TU on-line English test after the registration. Additionally, the applicant is requested to pass a Social Science test given by TU.

Latvian citizens also choose to study in the study programme in English, thus studies in English allow HEI to attract foreign students as well.

The goal of the study programme and learning outcomes are set following professional standards.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The goal of the study programme and learning outcomes are set following professional standards. The admission requirements for studies in Latvian and English are developed.

The qualification complies to the professional standard of the International Communication Manager (specialization of the profession of the Public Relations specialist).

The studies in English let students be employed by the foreign companies.

Strengths:

The internationalization of the study programme.

The earned degree allows graduates to compete in the labour market and continue their studies in the next level.

The degree allows graduates to work with foreign employers; the study programme is important globally as well.

The learning outcomes are strongly linked to the professional standard.

Different study forms (part time, full time, extramural for part time).

Weaknesses:

None

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.1. According to SAR, Part III, 2.1., the study programme meets the needs of the labor market and is constructed based on the “International Communication Manager” professional standard (2020). According to SAR, the programme follows the latest trends applicable to the international communication management and the entire programme is regularly planned together with the relevant stakeholders and based on their needs and expectations. The core goal of the programme is to educate international communication managers and their competencies and this is achieved via specific subjects (e.g.: Communication in International Organisations; Globalisation, European integration and multicultural communication; Marketing communication and brand management; International networking; International marketing; Crisis communication). The SAR mentions the number of the specifically developed competencies in such subjects as: “Marketing communication and brand management; Crises communication; Communication management and media studies; International marketing, Media literacy, etc.”. The process of the internships itself is the same as conducted in the “Public Relations” study programme. The SAR, Part III, 2.4., nicely lists the abilities that students acquire after putting theory into practice. Moreover, the majority of students choose their internships in Latvia, but there are some who go abroad. According to SAR the topics relate to the contemporary realities relevant to the international communication management. Based on SAR: “students in this programme have an average grade of 7.33 in the final state examinations.” The experts believe that an average could be higher.

Very similar comments can be repeated for this programme, as has already been mentioned for the “Public Relations” programme. If only assessing the study programme separately, all study courses seem to meet the major requirements, with the recommendation to include a clearer constructive alignment, put more detail into the assessment methods and criteria. However, it also needs to be emphasized that the major part of the programme overlaps with the “Public Relations” programme (more than half of the subjects overlap in all parts: Part A, B, and C - and this is not including the internships and the research related subjects). The experts think that this is a major issue in regards to the quality of the programme. This also should have an impact on the student enrollment, drop-out, satisfaction levels. The second part of this paragraph deals more with the study field assessment overall.

2.2. As written in SAR, Part III, 2.3., the courses offer a variety of study methods and assessment. In addition to the general methods, the lecturers are expected to always maintain student-centered

approaches via the used methods of teaching and assessment. In addition to local guest lecturers, the programme enjoys international visitors, moreover, the students have tours to various organizations. Same as for the “Public Relations” programme, the classrooms are equipped with the cameras and microphones, and due to the pandemic the students were taught in a hybrid format. After each course feedback is collected and courses are updated accordingly. Some of the more unique study methods include: students teaching students, an annual scientific conference, during some assessment the professionals from outside are invited to participate. Although, this programme seems to offer slightly more quite specific and unique methods, it is still observed that the course outlines lack a more specific constructive alignment among learning outcomes, study methods and assessment. As well as more specific assessment criteria should be listed.

2.3. The SAR, Part III, 2.6. provides the same information on feedback and surveys as is written for the “Public Relations” programme. The SAR states that the collected feedback signifies the high quality of the study programme, since the students, graduates and employers provide positive feedback. Upon the visit, the experts also heard that the mentioned stakeholders are satisfied.

2.4. Based on SAR, Part III, 2.7., 43 students (since 2015) have used the opportunity of the mobility to study in “the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, Malta, Denmark, Peru, the Czech Republic, Croatia, France, Spain, Estonia, South Korea, Greece, Italy, etc.” Moreover, since 2015 98 students have come to study at TU via the mobility programme from such countries as: “Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Turkey, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Czech Republic, South Korea, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, Romania, Lithuania, Spain, Portugal, Ukraine, France, Kosovo, etc.” Grounded on SAR, Part III, 2.7., the learning outcomes achieved during the mentioned mobility are recognized.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

According to the SAR, the “International Communication Management” programme content adheres to the majority of the requirements. It is constructed following the professional standard, the study methods relate to the goal and objectives of the programme and the course outlines, the theory is put into practice, the final thesis topics follow the trends, the student centered teaching and learning is ensured, the mobility takes place, feedback is collected and changes are implemented. Some of the areas for improvement include the strengthening of the final thesis, the more specific constructive alignment included in the course outline, and the concrete assessment criteria.

Strengths:

Student centered teaching and learning approach is maintained.

Regular feedback is collected.

Theory implemented in practice.

Contemporary study methods are applied.

The mobility exchange works well.

Weaknesses

The course outlines lack a more specific constructive alignment among learning outcomes, study methods and assessment.

Specific assessment criteria are lacking.

More than half of the programme overlaps with the second bachelor’s programme in this study field.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

3.1. The accessible resources in the library do not differ for this study programme from others.

Students of this study programme have accessibility to latest books in the fields of communication, communication management, public relations, advertising, integrated marketing communications is appropriate to ensure a successful study process for Latvian and foreign students, as the books are in Latvian, Russian, English and German languages.

The greatest benefit for students as mentioned within SAR (p.108) is that students of “International Communication Management” have the opportunity to develop their skills and can gain practical knowledge in using technical equipment and materials, using organization's audio, video and assembly hardware. It is being done as part of practical tasks in specific study courses within the study programme: digital marketing, speech skill and interpersonal communication, creative industries: audio and video, creative industries: cinema, creative industries: photo, creative industries: multimedia and creative industries: music. Leadership in visual editing, students use a Design Standard package that includes CS6 InDesign + CS6 Illustrator + CS6 Photoshop. Such activities are being organized through a contract with chaula.tv.

Students of this study programme during the on site visit outlined that they truly value the practical tasks as they help them later on in their future tasks understanding the benefit of knowing what to do and how to better use the existing resources in order to achieve the best outcome.

3.2. Not applicable.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Overall, students have the access to all the necessary resources for a successful study process. Everything complies with the outlined criteria thus no weaknesses are being found in this study programme concerning resources.

Strengths:

Students of this study programme are being able to gain practical skills not only through internship but also experiencing hand in tasks in an actual TV working environment which allows them to see how the theoretical knowledge gained in lectures can help them in the future using different tools and equipment.

Weaknesses:

None

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

4.1. 34 lecturers are involved in the study programme (SAR, Annex 3). Since 2015 the teaching staff has continually increased (SAR, p.125) at an average of 10% per year. Their academic and professional profile is adequate to the delivered courses, as confirmed by their biographies (SAR, Annex 4).

4.2. Qualification of teaching staff is adequate and complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments as confirmed by SAR and site visit, namely in meeting with study programme director and meeting with staff. Besides academic adequacy of teaching staff, several members of teaching members have corporate experience within the study programme field (SAR, Annex 4). This feature is highly appreciated by students as confirmed in meeting with students. In the last 2 academic years 2 international guest lecturers were attracted (SAR, p.109). The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations and the level of English proficiency is adequate as shown in SAR.

Also professional experience of teaching staff related to the field and should be considered as sufficient and important for ensuring quality of studies.

4.3. Not applicable.

4.4. Involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research at a national level is adequate while at an international level there is a clear need for improvement in involvement of teaching staff in international projects and international mobility. Statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of teaching staff during the reporting period (SAR, Annex 3) shows low dynamics in international mobility, specially in inbound where in 3 of the 6 years regarding the reporting period there was no incoming mobility.

In order to make an adequate assessment of involvement of the academic staff in scientific research specifically related to the study programme and how obtained information is used in this specific study process, SAR should have provided specific information. Nevertheless, SAR states that this information is available in description of study field 4.3 and 4.4 (p.110). The same answer is given for master and bachelor study programmes. As no specific information is provided, experts panel doesn't find evidence of mechanisms nor outputs that ensure specific approach and outputs to this specific study programme and study process.

4.5. According to SAR (p.110) and as confirmed in site visit main mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members in order to contribute to the improvement of the study courses/ modules and their correlation is made by meetings of the department and extended departments which are organized regularly (weekly at the beginning of the school year, then as needed) in order to exchange of information and alignment of actions. These meetings include all the lecturers and when a lecturer is unable to attend the meeting due to objective reasons, the information is provided in an aggregated form by email and telephone. In the 2019/2020 study year, a discussion of the study content of the teachers of "related" study courses was also introduced, thus maximally avoiding the duplication of information that is included in the study course (SAR, p.110).

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Qualifications and experience and academic and professional profile of teaching staff complies with regulatory enactments and is adequate to the delivered courses. Involvement of the teaching staff is in scientific research and/or artistic creation at a national level is adequate but should be increased at an international level. TU should have a more specific reporting approach when it comes to show evidence of specific programme research quality teaching staff research.

Strengths:

Good professional profile of teaching staff.

Sufficient professional experience of guest lecturers and teaching staff.

Weaknesses

Low involvement of the teaching staff is in scientific research at an international level.

Lack of demonstration of research specifically related to the study programme and how obtained information is used in this specific study process.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "International Communication Management"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The sample of the diploma complies with the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 202.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Document confirming that the HEI will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another HEI is signed with RISEBA accordingly students can continue studies in the study programme Public Relations and Advertising Management. Contract is signed in 2009 and is still valid. See SAR, Annex Other mandatory attachments.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex of SAR (Description of the Study programme; signed by Head of the ICS field) confirms that the institution guarantees 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 HEI.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programmes complies with the regulations regarding the scope of knowledge of the state language and the procedure for testing the state language proficiency for the performance of professional and official duties, SAR, Annex 13.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The level of English proficiency is shown in Annex 4 in the Europass standard for each teacher's CV.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The sample is attached and complies with all necessary information, Draft of the Contract, SAR, Annex 14.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The study course descriptions complies with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2 Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

The descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English. The requirements, study results, control forms and course methodological support is described. SAR, Annex 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation, Syllabus and requirements.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The study programme complies with the valid professional standard - fifth professional qualification level (5th LPQ) (corresponds to the sixth level of the Latvian qualifications framework (6th LQF)).

Available:

https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/prof_kval_pamatprasibas/2017/PKP-069.pdf

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Meets the Professional Higher Education Standard; complies with the regulation No. 512 of the Cabinet of Ministers, SAR, Annex 6.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: All members have publications or the five year practical experience, confirmed at SAR, Annex 3 and CVs of academic staff.

15 P5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: All above points are compliant with the State regulations (Law on The Higher Education Institutions), and the Professional Higher Education Standard, confirmed at Annex 6 of SAR (SK compliance with standard).

Requirements (R6-R8)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Provision complies with requirements. Students are being provided with hand on experience in chaula.tv where they can gain insights and practical knowledge in order to broaden their skills in the actual working environment. Such activities are being done in courses of digital marketing and creative industries.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants complies with the requirements.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Study programme meets requirements stated by Latvian State, the diploma is prepared correctly and other documents are provided. The learning outcomes of the study programme is set by following the professional standard of the profession of the International communication manager. And the study content includes the subjects named in the professional standard.

Strengths:

The study programme includes study courses that correspond to the duties and tasks of the International communication manager specified in the professional standard, it links to the real labour market.

Weaknesses

There are several knowledge listed in professional standard are similar to knowledge listed in the professional standard of the bachelor study programme "Public Relations", thus both programmes have the overlapping courses.

Evaluation of the study programme "International Communication Management"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "International Communication Management"

Short-term recommendations

1. Ensure a more concrete constructive alignment among learning outcomes, study methods and assessment in the course outlines.
2. Include very specific assessment criteria in the course outlines.
3. Increase involvement of teaching staff in international projects and mobility.

Long-term recommendations

Consider consolidating the study programme portfolio by redesigning the bachelor's study programmes into one broad study programme, perhaps with two specializations.

II. "Public Relations" ASSESSMENT

II. "Public Relations" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The name of the study programme is "Public Relations" which corresponds to the degree earned after studies. It is a professional Bachelor's Degree in Public Relations and the qualification of the Public Relations Manager. The bachelor programme ensures the achievement of study results (knowledge, skills and competences) in accordance with the European Qualifications Frameworks specified in the Latvian Education Classification (hereinafter - the Framework) for level 6 knowledge, skills and competence.

The degree ensures that they can continue studies for the Master's degree. Tasks of the study programme is clearly defined, it represents the specifics of the programme, for example, improve the quality of public relations and the good reputation of the profession in Latvia, promote the competitiveness of public relations managers in Latvia and the European Union (SAR, page 112). The valuable point is that qualification work should contain elements of innovation.

The study programme provides studies in the different forms (full time, part time and part time extramural) in Latvian.

Since 2017 there are no more groups in English, but studies are still provided in English as well. TU is considering possibility to implement this programme again, when there would be sufficient interest for applicants, therefore this implementation form is included in assessment application.

There is one technical mistake in description of admission requirements for 1 of 4 implementation forms of programme (full time English studies), the wrong programme name is written in admission requirements.

The amount of the credit points is 160 (240 ECTS). The study programme includes the development and defence of the qualification work. It complies with the regulations No. 512 of the Cabinet of

Ministers.

Admission requirements are defined according to the Bachelor's level studies - the applicant must have passed the centralized exam in Latvian, a foreign language (English, German, French or Russian) and mathematics. Applicants who have completed upper secondary education before 2004 must have passed a grade in the relevant subjects.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Tasks of the study programme are clearly defined, they represent the specifics of the programme. The degree to be acquired, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. The learning outcomes derived from the professional standard of the "Public Relations Manager".

There is technical mistake in admission requirements - the wrong programme name is written for 1 of 4 implementation forms of programme, for 3 forms it's correct name.

Strengths:

The earned degree allows graduates to compete in the labour market and continue their studies in the next level.

The learning outcomes are strongly linked to the professional standard.

The clear focus on one area of communication science.

Provision of the different forms of studies.

Weaknesses

None.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.1. According to SAR, Part III, 2.1., the Public Relations (PR) programme is developed following the requirements of the Public Relations Manager's professional standard (approved in 2020). In addition, all stakeholders (academic staff, students, employers, etc.) participate in the continuous development of the study programme, thus, according to SAR the programme follows the trends, needs, and expectations of the labor market. Moreover, the programme is under continuous review and enhancement by the necessary participants. According to SAR, Part III, 2.2., the programme content fully meets the learning outcomes and objectives of the study programme, by ensuring the linking between studies and practice, implementing the internships and achieving the result of preparing a competent public relations manager. According to SAR, Part III, 2.4., "students have four internships, of which the final one is a pre-diploma, during which the students not only acquire practical and professional knowledge, but also gather and collect information for their diploma work". Students are introduced to the internships and receive consultations. Through the internships the students are provided with the opportunities to experience in practice very specific activities, performance, work related to what the public relations manager should be able to do. According to SAR, Part III, 2.5., the final thesis topics are relevant to the latest and current trends related to the study programme. The theses results and findings are relevant to the labor market and to the individual student's career. The topics of the theses are discussed with the supervisors and, if necessary, with the other competent lecturers. The topics vary from quite general to more specific related to the specific sector or organizations. According to SAR, the "students in this study programme have an average grade of 7.12 in the final state examinations". Although TU considers this as a good result, the experts recommend working on the quality of the final theses by

attempting to increase the final result.

The descriptions of the study courses follow the major requirements set forth for the formulation of goals, learning outcomes, study and assessment methods. As mentioned below, more emphasis should be put on greater detail detected for the assessment methods and criteria. On one hand the programme and its courses, including internship and final thesis (research related) courses, seem to be of sufficient quality. But the experts' aim was not only to analyze separate programmes, but a study programme portfolio overall. Thus, it needs to be emphasized that the major part of the programme overlaps with the "International Communication Management" programme (more than half of the subjects overlap in all parts: Part A, B, and C - and this is not including the internships and the research related subjects). The experts think that this is a major issue in regards to the quality of the programme. This also should have an impact on the student enrollment, drop-out, satisfaction levels. However, this remark relates more to the study field assessment.

2.2. According to SAR, Part III, 2.3., the programme includes various study methods - auditoriums equipped with necessary technological tools, the business incubator, as well as the participation of the practitioners and guest lecturers. In addition, students use library resources. The pandemic resulted in the hybrid lectures, as well as cameras and microphones were installed in all classrooms. The students are introduced to the syllabus content during the first lecture and they are familiarized with the study and evaluation methods. The following is planned for the next year (SAR, Part III, 2.3.): "press conferences, press release, organization of a communication event, justice in the company's public relations specialists, justice in the role of public relations agency staff, in the role of public relations manager, etc." Contrary, while reviewing the course outlines, it was noticed that not very specific study or assessment methods are used to specifically relate to the study programme and its goals. Moreover, the constructive alignment among the course learning outcomes, the study methods and assessment are hard to detect. In addition, some assessment methods seem quite general - applicable to any study programme. During the visit it was made clear that the small groups and the lecturers' approach ensures a student centered teaching and learning processes.

It is recommended to rethink the logical order of the subjects in the programme: e.g., move the Acting Skills earlier in the programme (the 1st or the 2nd year) and move the Communication Campaigns subject later into the programme (perhaps the 3rd year).

2.3. According to SAR, Part III, 2.6., regular surveys of the students, graduates and employers are conducted. The results are used for the study programme development and improvement. Overall, the feedback from all of the mentioned stakeholders is very good. The SAR states that the "Public Relations" programme has consistently received high evaluations and is paying attention to the necessary corrections, is implementing changes and ensuring high study quality. Overall, these are quite general observations. However, during the meetings with the students, the lecturers, graduates and employers, it was made clear that the feedback is heard, well accepted and acted on.

2.4. According to SAR, Part III, 2.7., students have multiple international mobility opportunities - the double diploma, Erasmus +, the bilateral agreements. According to SAR: "since 2015 students have been using the opportunity to study Erasmus + in the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Norway and Turkey. Since 2015, 17 students have used this opportunity." There is no incoming mobility offered for this study programme, because it is currently not offered in English.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Overall, according to the SAR, the programme is meeting all of the standard requirements related to the quality of content: the study courses follow the goals, objectives and the learning outcomes of the programme, the study methods are clear, the internships are well thought out, the final thesis topics adhere to the contemporary trends; the feedback is regularly collected and the necessary changes are made. The students use the opportunity of outgoing mobility. Some of the areas for

improvement would be the lack of constructive alignment in the course outlines, lack of more specific assessment methods and criteria, the absence of the incoming mobility.

Strengths:

Theory put to practice through the internships.

Relevant thesis topics, related to the contemporary trends.

Participation of guest lecturers.

Relation of public relations with business.

Regular, complex feedback collection and implementation of the necessary corrections, changes.

Student centered teaching and learning is ensured.

Weaknesses

It is hard to detect the constructive alignment among the course learning outcomes, the study methods and assessment in the syllabi.

Some assessment methods seem quite general - applicable to any study programme.

No incoming mobility is offered, because the programme is not implemented in English.

More than half of the programme overlaps with the second bachelor's programme.

Some subjects (e.g., Acting Skills, Communication Campaigns) seem to be in the wrong place in the programme.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

3.1. It is being indicated within the SAR (p.89) that the HEI has taken into consideration the specific needs of students and necessary resources for the successful study process in "Public Relations" programme. It has been noted that the students have been provided access to video equipment as cameras, floodlights, hardware and software that allow them to photograph, film and edit video materials. Although, during the onsite visit experts did not see such equipment stating by the HEI that students use the equipment rarely if ever for study purposes because everything nowadays can be done with mobile phones. The concern raised by experts group is that for the Public Relations field to some extent knowledge and practicalities of how to use technical equipment may be needed at some point and it would be rather useful if such skills during studies are being provided.

The HEI is providing all the necessary technical base when it comes to the study process at the premises as well as remotely during Covid-19 pandemic. Audiences include high-quality visual equipment such as whiteboards, screens, multimedia projectors, audio and video hardware. Computerized workplaces are available for students. Stationary and portable multimedia projectors are installed. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all classrooms are equipped with cameras and microphones, so that the study process can also take place online. Such modernization of the auditoriums was implemented in March 2020 as it was noticed during the on site visit and walking around the premises of the HEI.

When it comes to resource base as such relating to libraries and databases the accessible materials do not differ from other study programmes which students stated as being convenient and enough for successful study process and paper writing.

3.2. Not applicable

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Overall, the HEI is complying with all the criteria that are related with resources of the specific study programme. The only concern is whether there are truly existing cameras and other technical tools that students may use in need because of training purposes.

Strengths:

Good resource base when it comes to library materials and databases available.

Auditoria include high-quality visual equipment such as whiteboards, screens, multimedia projectors, audio and video hardware.

Weaknesses

Lack of clarity of the accessible technical equipment for study purposes.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

4.1. 35 lecturers are involved in the study programme (SAR, Annex 3). Since 2015 the teaching staff has continually increased (SAR, p.125) at an average of 10% per year. Their academic and professional profile is adequate to the delivered courses, as confirmed by their biographies (SAR, Annex 4).

4.2. Qualification of teaching staff is adequate and complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments as confirmed by SAR and site visit, namely in meeting with study programme director and meeting with staff. Besides academic adequacy of teaching staff, several members of teaching members have corporate experience within the study programme field (SAR, Annex 4). This feature is highly appreciated by students as confirmed in meeting with students. There is a clear strategy in attracting lecturers with appropriate qualifications and experience (SAR, p.125). As many of those lecturers are not ready to give lectures for a long time they are attracted as guest lecturers, thus ensuring continuous synergy between the study process, its content and field and the latest communication trends in them (SAR, p.125). This justifies the high proportion of guest lecturers, as 24 out of the 35 lectures involved in the programme are guest lectures. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations and the level of English proficiency is adequate as shown in SAR. Also it is obvious that all guest lecturers have sufficient professional experience within a field and are likely to be able to transfer acquired professional knowledge and experience for TU students. It is proved by CV of teaching staff as well as relevant public profiles of those.

4.3. Not applicable.

4.4. Involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research at a national level is adequate while at an international level there is a clear need for improvement in involvement of teaching staff in international projects and international mobility. Statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of teaching staff during the reporting period (SAR, Annex 3) shows low dynamics in international mobility, specially in inbound where in 3 of the 6 years regarding the reporting period there was no incoming mobility.

In order to make an adequate assessment of involvement of the academic staff in scientific research specifically related to the study programme and how obtained information is used in this specific study process, SAR should have provided specific information. Nevertheless, SAR states that this information is available in description of study field 4.3 and 4.4 (p.126). The same answer is given for master and bachelor study programmes. As no specific information is provided, experts panel doesn't find evidence of mechanisms nor outputs that ensure specific approach and outputs to this specific study programme and study process.

4.5. According to SAR (p.126) and as confirmed in site visit main mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members in order to contribute to the improvement of the study courses/ modules and their correlation is made by meetings of the department and extended departments which are organized regularly (weekly at the beginning of the school year, then as needed) in order to exchange of information and alignment of actions. These meetings include all

the lecturers and when a lecturer is unable to attend the meeting due to objective reasons, the information is provided in an aggregated form by email and telephone. In the 2019/2020 study year, a discussion of the study content of the teachers of "related" study courses was also introduced, thus maximally avoiding the duplication of information that is included in the study course (SAR, p.127).

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

There is a clear strategy in attracting lecturers with appropriate qualifications and experience. Profile of teaching staff complies with regulatory enactments and is adequate to the delivered courses. Involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research at a national level is adequate but should be increased at an international level.

TU should have a more specific reporting approach when it comes to show evidence of specific programme research quality teaching staff research.

Strengths:

Clear strategy in attracting lecturers with appropriate qualifications and experience.

Sufficient professional experience of guest lecturers and teaching staff.

Weaknesses:

Low involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research at an international level.

Lack of demonstration of research specifically related to the study programme and how obtained information is used in this specific study process.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Public Relations"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Sample of diploma complies with the regulations No. 202 of the Cabinet of the Ministers.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Contract is added. In case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued students can continue the acquisition of education in the Riga Stradiņš University study programme Public Relations (contract signed 2011). Annex to SAR, Description of the study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex of SAR (Description of the Study programme; signed by Head of the ICS field) confirms that the institution guarantees 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 HEI.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programmes complies with the regulations regarding the scope of knowledge of the state language and the procedure for testing the state language proficiency for the performance of professional and official duties, SAR, Annex 13.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The level of English proficiency is shown in Annex 4 in the Europass standard for each teacher's CV.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The sample is provided and there is mandatory information included. SAR, Annex 14.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English. The requirements, study results, control forms and course methodological support are described. Annexes of syllabus and requirements are added in the section Description of the Study Field.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The study programme complies with the valid professional standard of Public Relations Manager, Annex 7, in Latvian,
<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-130.pdf>

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The study programme complies with the Regulation of Cabinet of Ministers No. 512 of 26 August 2014, Regulations on the national standard for second level professional higher education, <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=268761>.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: All members of the teaching staff have either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years or a five-year practical work experience. See SAR, Annex 6 and CVs, SAR, section Resources and Provision of the Study Direction.

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: All above assessed points are compliant with the State regulations (Law on The Higher Education Institutions), and the Professional Higher Education Standard.

Requirements (R6-R8)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: There are informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision available for the implementation of the study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Information in SAR (Annex 3, 4 and 5) confirms compliance of the qualification of teaching staff to the respective regulatory enactments (Law on Higher Education Institutions, <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/37967>).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The related requirements for the study programme have been met. The necessary information is provided and regulated by the State regulations (Law on The Higher Education Institutions), and the Professional Higher Education Standard.

Strengths:

It is a professional bachelor programme, there is a strong link with the industry.

Weaknesses

The content of the study programme is close to one more programme in this field - a lot of courses are overlapping.

Evaluation of the study programme "Public Relations"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Public Relations"

Short-term recommendations

1. Improve the course outlines by emphasizing the constructive alignment among the learning outcomes, study methods and assessment.
2. Revise the assessment methods and criteria to be more specific and more relevant to the goals and outcomes of the study programme.
3. Mobility is usually based on the reciprocity principles. There is no incoming mobility offered for this study programme, because it is currently not offered in English. Thus, it is recommended to find some alternative ways to accept incoming students - perhaps have them participate in some sort of mutual international projects in the study subject(s).
4. Move the Acting Skills earlier in the programme and move the Communication Campaigns subject later into the programme (perhaps the third year).
5. Increase involvement of teaching staff in international projects and mobility.
6. Correct the mistake of programme name in admission requirements for one of the implementation forms (full time English studies).

Long-term recommendations

1. To involve students in scientific activities (applied sciences) and in writing of publications.

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|--|
| 2. Consider consolidating the study programme portfolio by redesigning the bachelor's programmes into one broad programme, perhaps with two specializations. |
| 3. The accessible technical equipment for study purposes should be provided to students. |

II. "Public Relations" ASSESSMENT

II. "Public Relations" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The master programme continues the direction of the professional Public Relations (this is the title of the programme) and leads to the next education level. The degree of this study programme is Professional Master's Degree in Public Relations thus the qualification is the Strategic Communication manager, it corresponds to professional standard, approved in 2020. It is an independent profession without specializations. Standard of the Strategic Communication Manager (<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-131.pdf>) lists related profession - Public Relations manager, qualification that can be gained in bachelor studies. The amount of the credit points for the programme is 60 (90 ECTS) or 80 (120 ECTS); it depends from the previously obtained education. But it is not clearly described for whom is 60 and for whom is 80 CP in the SAR. For all implementation forms of programme there is the same information and same admission requirements stated in SAR. The period of the studies is 1 year 6 months and 2 years for full time studies, and accordingly 1 year 8 months and 2 years 1 month for part time studies.

There are studies in Latvian in forms of full time, part time and part time extramural studies and for English there are full time studies, so it leads to internationalization of this study programme.

For all forms and languages there are the same admission requirements: In order to enter the master's study programme "Public Relations", the applicant must present a diploma of a professional or academic bachelor's degree or a professional qualification obtained upon completion of a study programme lasting at least 4 years.

There is the same information for programme in English as for programme in Latvian in admission requirements in the SAR, thus there is no information about English test required in SAR and website.

The aim of the study programme is to let students acquire academic and professional knowledge, skills and competences in line with EU higher education qualifications requirements. It is the 5th level of professional qualification level and level 7 of the Latvian qualifications framework.

The objectives of the study programme are the same as the objectives stated in the professional standard of the Strategic Communication manager.

The learning outcomes of the study programme lead to improve the quality of public relations and the prestige of the sector in Latvia and develop strategic communication skills.

There is no clear transition (continuation of the competencies / learning outcomes to be developed at separate cycles) identified between the bachelor's and master's Public Relations programmes, when reviewing the objectives of both. Moreover, the TU does not clearly single itself out, by emphasizing the programmes unique selling points. Thus, the experts deliberate that the study field could be optimized / consolidated to include one broad bachelor's programme and two, more specialized, master's programmes.

The self-assessment report does not highlight the differences and specifics of the programme in the

context of both Latvian and foreign universities. It would be an added value if the role and specifics of the programme were described alongside the professional standard. The importance of this programme is not emphasized in the TU strategy either.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The qualification to be obtained is closely related to a Public Relations Manager by the professional standard, it means there is sustainability in this direction from the bachelor level to master level. Thus it is important not to overlap in the content of the study courses in the bachelor level. The learning outcomes are constructed under the professional standard thus not so much space and time for research activities.

There is no clear transition identified between the bachelor's and master's Public Relations programmes, when reviewing the objectives of both.

The SAR does not highlight the differences and specifics of the programme in the context of both Latvian and foreign universities, and the importance of this programme is not emphasized in the TU strategy.

The admission requirements are stated by the previous education period and in the relevant branch of sciences.

The studies are provided in Latvian and English, Latvian studies are provided in different study forms.

Strengths:

The obtained qualification is broader than the title of the study programme. It gives more opportunities for the industry.

The internationalization of the study programme.

Weaknesses:

It is not clear in which case the amount of studies is 60 and 80 credit points. There is no information available on the TU website as well. It should be described.

The objectives of the study programme could be more specified regarding HEI vision not just professional standard.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.1. According to SAR, Part III, 2.1., the programme adheres to the professional standard "Strategic Communication Manager". Despite this fact (adherence to the professional standards), some goals of the study programme seem to be similar with the goals of the Bachelor's study programme as they relate to the main tasks, skills and abilities. This may occur, because the bachelor's programme already aims at developing public relations managers (not just specialists). Moreover, the master's programme mentions basic tasks. The master's programme graduate will be able to "plan, develop, manage", meanwhile, the bachelor's programme graduate will be able to "plan, organize, and direct". Both programmes aim to develop the competence to forecast crises and risk, as well as both mention the usage of multimedia and modern technologies in communication. It is thus unclear why the master's programme does not aim so much as to emphasize the higher level as well as more specialized content of competencies, but instead repeats some of the bachelor's aims. It is understood that the professional standards may include similar information, however, it is up to the HEI to select and include the most appropriate information by clearly drawing a difference between undergraduate and graduate studies. According to SAR, the programme is developing strategic

communication managers. The programme is regularly improved based on the received feedback. According to SAR, the programme meets the needs and expectations of the labor market, the state and the society. It is quite challenging and complicated to read through the objectives of the master's study programme or for what the programme prepares the students, since the information is quite similar to the one for the bachelor's programme. Moreover, when defining the student capacity (SAR, Part III, 2.2.), the information is absolutely the same for both Public Relations programmes: "Student capacity includes public relations management, communication science, management knowledge, integrated marketing communication management, crisis communication management, management psychology, reputation management, lobbying, quality management, personnel management, research management, intercultural and interpersonal interaction." Conceptually and based on an educational approach, this cannot be like this. According to SAR, Part III, 2.4., the internship is conducted not only to put theory into practice, but also for the goal to collect feedback for the final thesis. The internship report must be defended in front of the defence commission. According to SAR, Part III, 2.5., the final thesis topics relate to the trends of the study programme. Same as with the bachelor's study programmes, it seems that the quality of the final thesis could be improved, to also increase the average student grade (which today is 7.54). Thus, while the courses are of sufficient quality (assessment methods and criteria are analyzed below), it is yet unclear, if the learning outcomes of the entire programme are appropriately defined.

It is yet a serious question why the subject "Crisis Communication" is in this master's study programme and at the same time in both bachelor's programmes, with either absolutely the same or very, very similar content (goals, topics, literature, etc.). This certainly needs to be corrected. A typical course is built on constructive alignment among the title, learning outcomes, study methods and assessment. Thus, the title should represent the goal of the course. Therefore, it cannot be the same for bachelor's and master's cycles. It should be rethought on how the course should adhere to the student expectations and needs. Students with experience (either academic from the bachelor's program or professional) should not be going through it again. Making this subject an elective, in this case, might be an alternative.

2.2. So that it is not repeated, the study methods, which are explained in SAR, Part III, 2.3., repeat what is provided for the bachelor's study programmes. Perhaps a more specific reference is made to the fact that individual consultations are provided for the students. This is perhaps due to the small number of students (i.e., only 2 students enrolled in year 2020) in the study programme. Such a small student number, helps to ensure the student centered teaching and learning approach.

2.3. Based on SAR, Part III, 2.6., the collection of feedback and the process of surveys as well as the decisions made on the received results, are absolutely the same as implemented for the bachelor's programme. One of the suggestions might be that while having such a small number of students, the study programme director could be conducting more focus groups and informal discussions with the students to ensure pro-active, timely feedback and implementation of the necessary changes.

2.4. According to SAR, Part III, 2.7, only the outgoing mobility is conducted, because the programme is taught in Latvian only. Since 2015 7 students have gone to study to such countries as: "Iceland, the Czech Republic, Portugal and Turkey, Germany" and have achieved the necessary learning outcomes. According to the provided statistical data, there were students in this programme studying in English, for the years of 2015 - 2019. Thus, it is unclear why not incoming mobility is mentioned (or took place).

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Overall, the programme meets the basic requirements: the study courses are of sufficient quality (except for the mentioned subject, which also repeats in the bachelor's programmes, and for the lack of clearer constructive alignment and more detailed assessment methods as well as criteria), the feedback is collected and necessary changes are made (should the number of students remain

low - a more private approach of face-to-face discussions could take place in addition to the formal surveys). The outgoing mobility has been taking place and it is unclear why no incoming mobility took place previously, since according to the statistical data, there were students who studied in English.

Despite this, it is unclear why some programme goals and objectives overlap with the goals and objectives of the bachelor's study programme. The goals do not appear to be a continuation from the bachelor to the master's programme, but rather a repetition. Conceptually this is wrong. Thus, the learning outcomes of the programme are not sufficient.

Strengths:

The internship is the preparation for the final master's thesis. Data may be collected during this time.

Final thesis topics related to current trends.

Student centered approach is ensured.

Regular feedback is collected and necessary changes are implemented.

Weaknesses

The aims and objectives of the master's study programme seem to be overlapping with the bachelor's programme. Thus, not clear how continuation is ensured.

No incoming mobility.

At least one subject ("Crisis Communication") repeats in this programme, as well as in both bachelor's study programmes.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

3.1. In this specific study programme no differences have been indicated when it comes to resources as the existing resource base in libraries and databases remain the same for all of the study programmes.

The existing technical base of study material allows to fully ensure the operation of study courses included in the study programme. Lectures take place in conference rooms, auditoria, computer classrooms, and students have access to a modern library with a vast reading room. Auditoria include high-quality visual equipment such as whiteboards, screens, multimedia projectors, audio and video hardware. Computerized workplaces are available for students. Stationary and portable multimedia projectors are installed.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic all rooms are equipped with cameras and microphones, so that the study process can also take place online. Such modernization of the auditoriums was implemented in March 2020. It was also noticed during the onsite visit by the experts group.

The list of books available in the library on communication, communication management, public relations, advertising, digital communication, integrated marketing communications, globalization is appropriate to ensure a successful study process for Latvian and foreign students, as the books are in Latvian, Russian, English and German languages.

The only aspect when it comes to the Masters programme that differs is the fact that it is a concern by the experts group that quite a small number of students are studying in this programme and it raises some questions why. According to SAR (Annex 5), total number of Masters students involved in this programme in 2020 is 14, only 2 of them where enrolled this study year (2020/2021). Number of students have significantly decreased during assessment period (e.g. there were 90 students in 2015) One of the possible problems is lack of marketing activity when it comes to this specific programme or it has larger competition when it comes to options in studying public relations in

other HEIs in Latvia, although ,during on site visit and questioning students and graduates they indicated that they feel good with the knowledge gained during their Bachelor studies at TU which even more complicates this aspect.

3.2. Not applicable.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Overall, the study programme complies with all the criteria of successful resource base establishment and functioning within the HEI.

Strengths:

Good resource base for students and accessibility to all the necessary resource materials for the purpose of the study process.

Weaknesses

Small and constantly decreasing number of students in this study programme.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

4.1. 14 lecturers are involved in the study programme (SAR, Annex 3). Their academic and professional profile is adequate to the delivered courses, as confirmed by their biographies (SAR, Annex 4).

During the reporting period the number of lecturers involved in the study programme was kept stable with almost no variations (SAR, p.90). TU keeps ensuring the programme teaching staff despite the decreasing number of students, as at the time of submitting SAR the number of lecturers of the programme (14) was the same as the number of students (14) according to SAR (p.92). This unbalanced proportion may lead to the need of adjustments in the future and TU is aware of the need to manage it without compromising the quality of the programme.

4.2. Qualification of teaching staff is adequate and complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments as confirmed by SAR and site visit, namely in meeting with study programme director and meeting with staff. Besides academic adequacy of teaching staff, several members of teaching staff have corporate experience within the study programme field (SAR, Annex 4). This feature is highly appreciated by students as confirmed in meeting with students. The proportion of full time lectures is balanced, as only 6 out of the 14 lectures involved in the programme are guest lectures. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations and the level of English proficiency is adequate as shown in SAR (Annex 4).

4.3. Not applicable.

4.4 . Involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research at a national level is adequate while at an international level there is a clear need for improvement in involvement of teaching staff in international projects and international mobility. Statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of teaching staff during the reporting period (SAR, Annex 3) shows low dynamics in international mobility, specially in inbound where in 3 of the 6 years regarding the reporting period there was no incoming mobility.

In order to make an adequate assessment of involvement of the academic staff in scientific research specifically related to the study programme and how obtained information is used in this specific study process, SAR should have provided specific information. Nevertheless, SAR states that this

information is available in description of study field 4.3 and 4.4 (p.91). The same answer is given for master and bachelor study programmes. As no specific information is provided, experts panel doesn't find evidence of mechanisms nor outputs that ensure specific approach and outputs to this specific study programme and study process.

Experts do not point out the lack of international publications, they point out the low involvement of teaching staff in international research projects. Evidences of this come from site visit and SAR (p.54) with only 2 participation in international projects being identified and no demonstration of their specific relation with Public Relations Master programme.

Information should be specific not only for study field but also for each study programme. In SAR and during the site visit no clear information was given on how involvement in research is used on the study process of this specific master programme. Evidence of this is that in SAR (p.126) no specific information regarding the study programme is given. SAR only gives generic information on study field.

4.5. According to SAR (p.91) and as confirmed in site visit main mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members in order to contribute to the improvement of the study courses/modules and their correlation is made by meetings of the department and extended departments which are organized regularly (weekly at the beginning of the school year, then as needed) in order to exchange of information and alignment of actions. These meetings include all the lecturers and when a lecturer is unable to attend the meeting due to objective reasons, the information is provided in an aggregated form by email and telephone. In the 2019/2020 study year, a discussion of the study content of the teachers of "related" study courses was also introduced, thus maximally avoiding the duplication of information that is included in the study course (SAR, p.91). Nevertheless, based on syllabus analysis and meetings in site visit there is need for improvement as there is evidence of overlapping syllabus among different courses.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Academic and professional profile of teaching staff complies with regulatory enactments and is adequate to the delivered courses. In spite of the decreasing number of students in the programme, TU keeps ensuring the standards of teaching staff.

Involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research at a national level is adequate but should be increased at an international level.

TU should have a more specific reporting approach when it comes to show evidence of specific programme research quality teaching staff research.

Strengths:

Effort from TU in keeping quality standards of teaching staff in spite of the decreasing number of students.

Good professional profile of teaching staff.

Weaknesses:

Low involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research at an international level.

Lack of demonstration of research and/or artistic creation specifically related to the study programme and how obtained information is used in this specific study process.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Public Relations"

Requirements

- 1 1. The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: The diploma sample complies with the guidelines No. 202 of the Cabinet of Ministers and complies with the state-recognised documents of higher education; the sample is attached.
- 2 2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: There are two contracts with Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences and Daugavpils University. SAR, Annex, Description of the Study Programme - Other mandatory attachments.
- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: Annex of SAR (Description of the Study programme; signed by Head of the ICS field) confirms that the institution guarantees 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 HEI.
- 4 4. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: The knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programmes complies with the regulations regarding the scope of knowledge of the state language and the procedure for testing the state language proficiency for the performance of professional and official duties, SAR, Annex 13.
- 5 5. The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: The level of English proficiency is shown in Annex 4 in the Europass standard for each teacher's CV.
- 6 6. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts.
Assessment of compliance: Not relevant
Justification:
- 7 7. The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.
Assessment of compliance: Not relevant
Justification:
- 8 8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions, SAR, Annex, Description of the Study Programme - Other mandatory attachments.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The study course descriptions comply with the requirements with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

The descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English. The requirements, study results, control forms and course methodological support is described. SAR, Description of the Study Programme - 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation, Annexes of syllabus and requirements.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The study programme complies with the valid professional standard of Strategic Communication Manager (SAR, Annex 7):

<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-131.pdf>

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Complies with the regulation No. 512 of the Cabinet of Ministers .

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: All members of the teaching staff have either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years or a five-year practical work experience.

Confirmed in SAR, Annex 6 and CVs, SAR, section Resources and Provision of the Study Direction.

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: All above points compliant with the State regulations (Law on The Higher Education Institutions), and the Professional Higher Education Standard.

Requirements (R6-R8)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The informative and technical provision is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Professors, associate professors and masters -lecturers), as well as guest lecturers from other Latvian universities, participate in the implementation of the study process.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: According to SAR, Part III, Section 2, is somewhat based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science. Although, it is mentioned that the most current trends are followed, the learning outcomes of the programme, seem to repeat some of the goals set for the bachelor's programme, what is conceptually wrong.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

There is a lack of information for the study programme about teaching staff, in the SAR, part 3, 4.2., 4.3., 4.4. The information is very general. More detailed information is found in the description of the study field and in CVs. The programme plan is represented with names and surnames without academic degrees and positions.

The study programme is based on the professional standard of the Strategic Communication Manager and ensures that graduates can continue their doctoral studies, thus it doesn't appear in the scientific activities and specific goals of learning outcomes. There is the lack of scientific or applied research in this study programme and participation in national or international projects as well.

It is yet unclear why some programme goals and objectives overlap with the goals and objectives of the bachelor's study programme. The goals do not appear to be a continuation from the bachelor to the master's programme, but rather a repetition. Conceptually this is wrong. Thus, the learning outcomes of the programme are not sufficient (do not correspond to the master level). The professional standard and the Law on Higher Education Institutions do not prevent the diversification of the content of the study programme and the introduction of additional study courses, which make this programme different and unique from the bachelor's study programme.

Seems that TU is only adhering to the requirements on the professional standards while formulating the programme's goals and learning outcomes. Thus, there are two aspects lacking – 1) the clear separation between the bachelor's and master's cycles (no clear continuation is identified); b) the absence of the TU's and the programmes uniqueness – if the HEI limits itself to only following the formal requirements of the professional standards, for students the strengths of a certain programme might be unclear as compared to any other similar programmes at other HEI's. It is not

through the course outlines where the uniqueness is displayed, it is through the goals and learning outcomes of the programme, which then logically map to and reveal through the course outlines.

Strengths:

Compliance and careful follow-up to the professional standard.

Weaknesses

The content of the programme is similar to bachelor level.

There is no clear distinction between bachelor and master level, therefore it could be resumed that learning outcomes of this programme do not correspond to master level.

There is the lack of scientific or applied research or participation in the projects at national or international level.

Evaluation of the study programme "Public Relations"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Public Relations"

Short-term recommendations

1. The amount of credit points of studies and it`s periods should be defined, thus the requirements of the previous education as well. This information should be described in the admission requirements which are available for students.
2. To clarify information about studies in English on the HEI website.
3. To clarify entry requirements in programme parameters, if English language proficiency confirmation is needed for studies in English.
4. Organize focus-groups to ensure a more proactive feedback collection and implementation of more timely necessary changes.
5. Should think of some international projects, in order to ensure the incoming numbers of international students (as an alternative to incoming mobility).
6. Increase involvement of teaching staff in international projects and mobility.
7. The name of the subject "Crisis Communication" should be reconsidered to fit its main goal. In addition, TU should consider making it an elective, in order to avoid a potential repetition for the students with either academic or professional experience in this area.

Long-term recommendations

1. The goal and objectives, as well as learning outcomes, of the programme should be reviewed to meet the requirements of the master's study programme and not to overlap with the bachelor's study programme.
2. No subjects should be repeating at bachelor's and master's levels.

II. "Communication Management" ASSESSMENT

II. "Communication Management" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The name of the study programme is "Communication Management". Degree to be acquired in English is Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Media and Communication, SAR, page 131, in Latvian doktora zinātniskais grāds plašsaziņas līdzekļu un komunikācijas zinātnes nozarē. Regarding to Cabinet Regulations the obtained degree should be in the form of locative (Cabinet regulations No 202), (in Latvian - zinātniskais doktora grāds zinātnes doktors plašsaziņas līdzekļos un komunikācijā) according to field of science (Cabinet regulations No 49). During the visit TU representatives agreed to change the name of the degree to comply with latest regulations of the Cabinet Regulations.

TU has rights to confer Doctoral Degree in this science field (according to MK regulations No. 1000), and there is a Council for Conferral of a Doctoral Degree in place (Promocijas padome) (according to SAR, p 59, "The University has three permanent promotion boards, one of which is Permanent Promotion Council in Media and Communication field: <https://www.turiba.lv/en/research/councils>").

For now there are just 3 graduates, two of the PhD thesis is defended by the academic staff who are working in HEI (mentioned names in the SAR, p.139 are find on the list of the academic staff).

The programme provides research on different topics - media system, corporate communication, Integrated Marketing Communication, New Media Technologies, Latvian mass media market.

The objective of the study programme is to train innovative and creative social science professionals with a PhD who, using the knowledge, skills and competences acquired in the programme will be experts in the field of communication and management.

Thus this objective leads to broader specifics of this study programme - enhance the competitiveness of communication professionals in the national and European communication labor market and build on this knowledge and a high level of skills and competences in communication, media, public relations, management and marketing. The "Communication Management" doctoral programme provides knowledge in the following areas: communication theories and knowledge of the field, social sciences methodologies and research methods in media and communication science and management science, thus the study results lead to development of the research knowledge and skills. The role of the management, particularly strategic management, is stressed in the SAR, page 133, thus the doctoral programme tries to combine communication and management. This makes the programme competitive in the field of doctoral studies.

The form of the study programme is full time studies in Latvian and English, it gives opportunity for foreigners to study in this programme.

Admission requirements are set for both languages similar according to this study level - the previous education in this field and the research idea should be known to start doctoral studies. There is no information in admission requirements regarding proof of English language proficiency for implementation form of this study programme in English.

The criteria for development of PhD thesis and its quality is structured and the order is represented to students. The Council of the Doctoral study programme is responsible for this process.

There is doctoral programme council in the field of media and communication science, communication theory. Council decides on the development of the doctoral thesis (with mark) at the end of the academic year in accordance with the criteria approved by the Council.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The goal of the study programme is set by following bachelor and master level education backgrounds. A specific direction has been selected in doctoral studies, with the aim of combining

communication and management by developing them in research.

The programme is provided in Latvian and English.

The organisational process of the study programme is clear and well structured.

There is inaccuracy in the title of the obtained degree. It should be clarified following the newest version of the title of the degree of the regulations of Latvian Higher Education system.

Strengths:

The aim of the study programme meets the needs of industry and link them closely to the science.

Difference from the other doctoral programmes, thus the HEI combines two important fields nowadays - communication and media and management.

The internationalisation of the study programme.

The competitiveness of the doctoral study programme.

Variability of the topics for the PhD thesis.

Weaknesses:

Low number of the graduates in this programme.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.1. According to SAR, Part III, 2.1., the programme is logically and coherently constructed with the mandatory subjects aimed to acquire theoretical knowledge and research and pedagogical skills, while the elective provide the students with the possibility to elect relevant subjects to their own research and go more in-depth into the necessary content. Teaching takes place in such a way that professors link content to the needs of the Ph.D. student's research. The content includes not only the subjects relevant to communication, but also to management, as well as of course content related to methodological aspects. The content meets the highest levels of the Bloom's taxonomy. It also develops the student's independence in conducting necessary research. Theoretical seminars are a part of the programme. It is stated that the programme benchmarks itself to the similar programmes abroad. The programme regularly undergoes own self-assessment. As a result, new courses are introduced into the programme. The courses are taught by the professors from different universities both from Latvia and abroad. The core of the doctoral programme is the aim to ensure quality by the selection of adequate professors, benchmarking the programme to the other similar programmes, and through the collection of feedback. Competitiveness of the programme is systematically ensured. According to SAR, Part III, 2.2., the research courses and projects are in line with the innovative doctoral programme. The topics of the scientific research meet the objectives of the programme as well as the research areas of the professors. It follows the current media and communication activities in order to pursue the development of science and practice. The SAR lists the major research areas. The doctoral programme council assesses and decides on the development of the doctoral thesis based on the agreed upon criteria known to the students. Doctoral candidates also participate in the development and implementation of the bachelor's and master's programmes. Based on SAR, Part III, 2.5., the doctoral research topics fully align with the programme's goals and objectives. Moreover, it is stated that the students who enroll into this programme, come with the very specific suggestions on "further improvement of (communication) practice, especially in Latvia." The study programme's quality is regularly and strictly assessed. Overall, the study courses in this programme meet the necessary requirements. As is mentioned for the other programmes, the uniform approach of the study courses could put more emphasis on the constructive alignment and more concrete assessment methods as well as assessment criteria.

2.2. According to SAR, Part III, 2.3., the aim of the courses is the development of the professional abilities. This is accomplished through the various methods: “lectures, demonstrations, pair work, discussions, assignments, self assessment questions and independent study projects and the use of one's initiative.” A major method included in the doctoral studies, is the ability of students to provide solutions in various forms and through various methods. “The solutions proposed by the doctoral students are evaluated from the point of view of academic importance, practical application and, of course, whether the solution is related to the chosen theme of the doctoral thesis.” This is considered to be a valuable and meaningful approach, when developing students’ critical thinking, problem solving, etc. Course outlines are regularly improved to not only meet the objectives of the study programme, but to also meet the needs and expectations of the students. This, as well as the student supervision, ensure the student centered teaching and learning approach. Professors simultaneously teach students to be independent learners and researchers, but at the same time provide them with support.

It was mentioned during the visit that more interactivity is wanted from the students during the study process and more faculty from abroad would be expected.

2.3. According to SAR, Part III, 2.6., the regular oral and written feedback is collected. Based on it, the necessary changes have been implemented (e.g., changing and attracting new professors). Overall, it is stated that the students are satisfied with the programme’s content and organization. Students primarily like the competitiveness in the labor market.

2.4. Mobility is relatively scarce due to the profile of students coming from different working areas and engaged in the professional matters. Despite its scarcity, the learning outcomes are still achieved in the presently taking place mobility instances.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Overall, the doctoral programme meets its goals and objectives. It ensures the development of research related aspects, as well as of those related to professional environment. Student supervisors ensure the development of students’ independence, autonomy, critical thinking, research abilities, and application in the real world to improve certain aspects. Regular feedback is collected and necessary changes are made. Mobility should be improved to allow the students to go abroad and gain experience in research related matters.

Strengths:

The programme does not only emphasize the research related aspects, such as the development of researchers, the creation of new knowledge, but it also underlines the relevance for the professional realities.

Supervisors of the doctoral students maintain student centered learning and teaching approach, as well as collaborate on the relation of the research topic to the needs and expectations of the students.

Weaknesses:

Mobility is relatively scarce.

Students claim that they lack interactivity and ask for even more international academic staff.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

3.1. The existing resource base does not differ from other study programmes as the HEI provides the same databases and books, materials in the library.

3.2. As indicated in the SAR (p.141-142) HEI's modern infrastructure (including computers with SPSS

software) provides a favourable environment for study and scientific work. The resources of the HEI library are constantly developing, complementing them with the most relevant communication science literature for the programme profile, for which thematic exhibitions are organised on the initiative of the programme. In addition, doctoral candidates are invited to use other public libraries, including the specialised library of the University of Latvia School of Social Sciences and the National Library of Latvia, which is funded by taxpayers.

Although, when it comes to SPSS software during experts' visits students were questioned and their knowledge in use of it is doubtful and questionable which raises a concern whether it has to be improved.

For the provision of studies, the programme has purposefully promoted the release of media and communication science literature in the Latvian publishing house of higher education (A. Dimants, J. Lehtonen, A. Rožukalne books on journalism, risk and crisis communication and media audiences), which are actively used in communication studies in other Latvian high schools. Currently, with the support of the Goethe Institute (Germany), the translation of the German Professor Klaus Beck's monograph "Communication Science" into the scientific version of Prof. A. Dimants- the first comprehensive work on Latvian media and communication science. Similarly, knowing the acute necessity directly for the study process, together with colleagues from other universities as Riga Stradiņš University, Vidzeme University as well as linguists-terminologists, active work has been launched this year on the Latvian language communication term dictionary.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Overall, the resource base of this programme is good and students are satisfied with the existing materials provided to them. The only concern raised is the knowledge of students to work with SPSS software and it should be addressed in order to improve students' knowledge in work with it.

Strengths:

Good resource base for studying purposes and easy accessibility.

Weaknesses:

Lack of knowledge of students of the SPSS software.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

4.1. 16 lecturers are involved in the study programme according to SAR (Annex 3). All of them have a doctoral degree and 3 of them are experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science. 4 of them are guest lectures (SAR, p.143). During the reporting period changes were made in the teaching staff. The number of elected lectures has decreased and some lectures teach more than one course. Evidence of this is for instance 1 lecturer is teaching 3 courses (SAR, p.142). Only one lecturer is from abroad which may not contribute to accelerate the international dimension of the programme.

4.2. Qualification of teaching staff is adequate and complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments as confirmed by SAR and site visit, namely in meeting with study programme director and meeting with staff. The proportion of full time lectures is balanced, as only 4 out of the 16 lectures involved in the programme are guest lectures. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations and the level of English proficiency is adequate as shown in SAR (Annex 4).

4.3. There is room for improvement in the involvement of the academic staff in research-related

projects that contribute to the implementation of a high-quality doctoral study programme. Nevertheless SAR (p.144) presents some good cases of relevant projects participation like Erasmus+ projects and European Journalism Observatory.

4.4. The teaching staff is involved in scientific research and Annex 6 of SAR confirms that scientific research activity is growing and lecturers are more actively engaged in research, published books and monographs. Nevertheless more attention should be given to international projects and publications. The results of scientific research are integrated into the study process, the lecturers give examples in their study courses, analyze current issues and problems discovered (SAR, p.146).

4.5. TU ensures mechanisms for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff which contributes to the improvement of the study courses/ modules and their correlation (SAR, p.147). Those mechanisms are based on a systematic approach between the Doctoral Programme Council and the Programme Director and the academic staff in developing the content of the study programme and individual study courses. Also students surveys and participation of teaching staff in theoretical seminars organized each semester by doctoral students are examples of this type of mechanism. Meeting with students and meeting with teaching staff confirmed the importance of these mechanisms.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Qualification of teaching staff is adequate and complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. Although increasing, there is still room for growth in the number of international publications and international projects. Good mechanisms for mutual collaboration between teaching staff in order to contribute to the quality of study process.

Strengths:

Increasing involvement of teaching staff in publications and research projects.

Good mechanisms for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff which contributes to the improvement of the study courses.

Weaknesses

The decreasing number of lecturers involved in the study programme.

Some lecturers teach up to three courses in the programme.

Although growing, it is still scarce the number of lecturers involved in international research projects.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Communication Management"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The sample of the diploma complies with the regulations No 202 of the Cabinet of the Ministers.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The document attesting that a TU student will be able to continue education in another study programme or another university (contract with another accredited university) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated is with Rīgas Stradiņš University. Agreement confirming that HEI will provide an option to continue doctoral programme in another HEI is Annex 17 of SAR.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The confirmation about the compensation is added, SAR, Description of the Study Programme, Annex.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programs complies with the regulations regarding the scope of knowledge of the state language and the procedure for testing the state language proficiency for the performance of professional and official duties, SAR, Annex 13.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The level of English proficiency is shown in Annex 4 of SAR in the Europass standard for each teacher's CV.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: There are 16 members of the teaching staff with doctoral degrees and 3 experts approved by Latvian Science Council (LSC) (one of them (G. J. Simons) became an expert from 01.04.2021.), therefore experts assess this requirement as fully compliant.

However, there are some inaccuracies in the SAR and in the Annexes of SAR (Programmas apliecinājums par atbilstību Augstskolu likumam, 10 Doktora apliecinājums, 3_Virziena_docetaji), that should be amended. In the SAR and listed Annexes information regarding teaching staff elected to academic positions and experts approved by LSC in several cases does not comply with information in VIIS and LSC experts database. Experts consider it a technical error or outdated information that should be updated, not non-compliance with requirement.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: It complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The contract complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The support from the Council for Higher Education is attached, SAR, Description of the Study program, Annex of Council for Higher Education Institution.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Academic staff has publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, SAR, page 143-144. or practical experience, Annex CVs.

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: All above assessed points are compliant with the State regulations (Law on The Higher Education Institutions).

Requirements (R6-R8)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The support is provided. The informative and technical provision is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes and all the necessary resources are available for students when needed thus maintaining a good research base.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Information in SAR (Annex 3, 4 and 5) confirms compliance of the qualification of teaching staff to the respective regulatory enactments (Law on Higher Education Institutions, <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/37967>).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Stated by the scientific activity of the academic staff, SAR, page 143-144.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The programme meets the requirements of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the State Academic Education Standard, the necessary information is proved by Annexes. However, the scientific activity could be more as the potential of academic staff (CVs) shows it, for example, realisation of the projects and the amount of publications.

Election status indicated in Annex 3 of SAR does not match the data of the State Education Information System (about the elected academic staff and their position).

Strengths:

The academic staff ensure an adequate study process; it complies with the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers and the Latvian Law on The Higher Education.

Weaknesses:

The lack of scientific projects, academic staff and students are involved.

Evaluation of the study programme "Communication Management"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Communication Management"

Short-term recommendations

1. Should find ways to make mobility work (e.g., research based internships, project based visits, similar), so that students can go abroad for research related experience.

2. Include more interaction (e.g., with the lecturers, among students, perhaps some sort of research oriented discussions, lunch - seminars with presentations; similar) in the study process.
3. Avoid using the same lecturer to teach more than one course.
4. Specify and indicate correct information about the experts approved by Latvian Science Council and their position in TU in the documents confirming compliances of academic staff with requirements of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (Annexes of SAR (Programmas apliecinajums par atbilstību Augstskolu likumam, 10 Doktora apliecinajums).
5. Election status of teaching staff indicated in Annex 3 of SAR do not match the data of the State Education Information System, it should be corrected according to the data of the State Education Information System.
6. The proof of English language proficiency for implementation form of this study programme in English should be clarified it in admission requirements.
7. The use of the software SPSS should be included in the content of the study courses for development of the PhD thesis.

Long-term recommendations

1. Invite even more international faculty.
2. Increase the number of lecturers involved in international research projects.

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

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

Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:	Fully compliant			According to SAR, Part I, 1.3. and as per the experts' visit HEI ensures improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.	Fully compliant			Cooperation agreements with several local and foreign partner institutions signed and exist.
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).	Fully compliant			The study field shows clear evidences of increasing focus on research (SAR, Annex 6) and mechanisms for the involvement of students and the teaching staff in scientific research are adequate. The teaching staff profile is aligned with the study field scope.
R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.		Partially compliant		All major shortcomings and deficiencies stated in previous assessment process have been addressed, except one, regarding gender equality policy which should be justified.

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	International Communication Management (42321)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
2	Public Relations (42342)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
3	Public Relations (47342)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Average

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
4	Communication Management (51321)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

There are no Dissenting Opinions of the Experts.