

JOINT REPORT BY THE EXPERTS ON THE INCLUSION OF A LICENSED STUDY
PROGRAMME ON THE ACCREDITATION FORM

Rīga Stradiņš University

STUDY FIELD

Health Care

STUDY PROGRAMME

**Third cycle higher education study programme/
Scientific doctoral study programme “Health Care”**

Codes of sub-programmes: 51721 – Medicine, 51725 – Pharmacy, 51313 – Psychology

Experts:

1. Prof. Baiba Jansone, PhD
2. Assoc. Prof. Jurgita Andruskiene, PhD

May, 2023

Table of contents

I. Summary of the Assessment.....	3
II. Description of the study programme	5
1. Indicators describing the Study Programme.....	5
2. Topicality of the study programme	11
3. Resources and provision	14
4. Implementation of the recommendations received during the licensing of the study programme	29
III. Assessment of the study programme	31
IV. Recommendations.....	31

I. Summary of the Assessment

The scientific doctoral study programme “Health Care” as a higher, third cycle higher education programme, is an integral part of the study field “Health Care”, ensuring excellence of research, career growth opportunities and preparing high-quality academic staff in the training of other study fields and integration of student research into the study process. The doctoral study programmes (which were consolidated in the study programme under assessment) “Medicine” and “Pharmacy” were implemented from 21.06.2005, while “Psychology” was licensed on 14.10.2016.

Merging separate (previously) study programmes into the doctoral study programme „Health Care“ created the efficient synergy, which provided an opportunity to the graduates, future lead researchers, heads of scientific institutions and departments to develop a holistic view, a biopsychosocial approach, which is the mainstream approach to health care. A novel biopsychosocial approach provided the opportunity to shift from internal problems of specific sectors to global health care challenges such as ageing, risks deriving from industrial revolution and technological development.

Aim of the study programme reflects an integrated and complementary approach that enables training highly qualified scientists and teaching staff successfully coping with the huge challenges in changing national and international environments, at the same time ensuring the continuity and sustainability of education. Learning outcomes of the study programme „Health Care“ are closely related with the learning outcomes of each sub-programme (Description of the Study Programme, hereinafter *Description*, p. 9). Admission requirements provided in the description of the sub-programmes are slightly different, it provides great possibilities for applicants having different backgrounds, from master’s degree in health care/medicine/dentistry/biology/biomedicine/pharmacy (admission requirements to sub-programme “Medicine”), master’s degree in pharmacy/chemistry/medicine/stomatology/biology/master’s of engineering in material sciences) (admission requirements to sub-programme “Pharmacy”), master’s degree in psychology or a corresponding higher education diploma in social and human action sciences or health care, or social welfare, or in pedagogy education and education sciences or in humanities (admission requirements to sub-programme “Psychology”). Different scientific degrees are awarded (Doctor of Sciences (*PhD*) in Medicine and Health Sciences upon graduation from the sub-programmes “Medicine” and “Pharmacy” and Doctor of Sciences (*PhD*) in Social Sciences upon graduation from the sub-programme “Psychology”).

Interdisciplinarity and individualisation of the studies are perceived as the main strengths of the study programme, witnessed by all interested parties, in particular the students and employers. The employers of the study programme emphasised a high need of psychology specialists in the hospital, moreover, emphasised the need of widening collaboration with RSU. The great emphasis, while assuring quality of studies, is set on the feedback (discussion and survey) from doctoral students, the teaching staff, and thesis supervisors about the study process and new research skills. Doctoral students participate in the quality assurance of the study program using the recently developed feedback reception techniques, which include oral and written surveys.

A wide range of e-resources, e-book databases, and full-text databases of journals are provided for doctoral students of all sub-programmes in the study program "Health Care". Doctoral study grants are available to students in the sub-programs "Medicine" and "Pharmacy". Modern research infrastructure and premises are available for doctoral students. At RSU, the qualifications standards for choosing the academic staff have been set. Many of the academic staff members of the doctoral study program are recognized experts by the Latvian Science Council (LSC). Academic staff take part in international and national research initiatives, and they also participate in Erasmus plus mobility teaching at foreign higher education institutions. Highly qualified staff team includes the experts in methodology and other study programme-related courses, who have confirmed their qualification in the form of internationally cited interdisciplinary publications and by working effectively in scientific project teams at international and national levels. RSU regularly reviews the requirements for obtaining a doctoral degree. An increase in scientific articles has been noted in the sub-programmes "Medicine" and "Pharmacy". To raise the standard of the doctoral study program "Health Care", two foreign visiting lecturers and a visiting associate professor from Ventspils University are involved. Several international leaders have been attracted to the courses. An international environment is beginning to be established in the doctoral study program "Health Care" with the participation of one doctoral student in the English group of the sub-program "Medicine".

There were some weaknesses identified during on-site visit. There is a lack of understanding how the learning outcomes of the course are related with the learning outcomes with each of sub-programmes, as well as the study programme "Health Care". There is a lack of reflexion in the study course descriptions what study methods are being applied (reflecting collaboration of the students from three sub-programmes) when the course is being taught simultaneously for the students from three different sub-programmes. There is a lack of communication with employers, in particular the hospital representatives, in discussing the lacking competences of the graduates as well as the development of future specialisations. There is no detailed plan in place for the long-term research interactions between the "Psychology" sub-program and the "Medicine" and "Pharmacy" sub-programs. The latter semesters of the doctoral program have the highest student dropout rates. Low number of students that have graduated from the previous doctoral program "Psychology". Doctoral students' research mobility is low. Relevant research journals are not referred to, and e-book databases are not linked to the stated e-books in the course descriptions. No doctoral study grants are provided for the sub-program "Psychology". For example, "Two anonymously reviewed scientific publications in scientific journals or conference proceedings indexed in the SCOPUS or Web of Science or included in the ERIH+" are currently the requirements for successfully completing the four-year doctoral study program. Scientific articles that have undergone peer review and been published in journals adhere to stricter standards and have higher thesis quality, not the case with conference proceedings. There is a shortage of students with a background in biology studying in the PhD program "Health Care." Insufficient involvement of the students in the preparation of the applications of scientific research projects. Even though a working committee was formed in March 2022 to create a long-term mobility development strategy, doctoral mobility has not increased yet.

II. Description of the study programme

1. Indicators describing the Study Programme

1.	Name of the higher education institution/college	Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU)
2.	Name of the study field corresponding to the study programme	Health Care
3.	Name of the study programme	Third cycle higher education study programme/ Scientific doctoral study programme "Health Care"
4.	Code of the study programme in accordance with the Latvian Education Classification	51721 – Medicine 51725 – Pharmacy 51313 – Psychology
5.	Language of study programme implementation	Latvian, English
6.	Amount, duration, form and type of the study programme (also distance-learning)	Full-time regular studies 4 years 176 CP (264 ECTS)
7.	Admission requirements	<p>1. <u>In Medicine</u>: a Master's degree in health care or an equivalent degree in medicine, dentistry, biology, biomedicine or pharmacy;</p> <p>2. <u>In Pharmacy</u>: a Master's degree in health care or an equivalent degree in pharmacy, chemistry, medicine, stomatology or biology, or a Master's degree of engineering in materials sciences;</p> <p>3. <u>in Psychology</u>: a Master's degree in psychology or a corresponding higher education diploma in social and human action sciences or health care, or social welfare, or in pedagogy education and education sciences or in humanities.</p> <p>An applicant who has not obtained a Master's or Bachelor's degree in psychology must additionally pass an entrance examination in the basic branches of psychology: general (cognitive) psychology; developmental psychology; personality psychology; social psychology; clinical psychology; health psychology.</p>

		For studies in English, a proof of English language proficiency of at least level B2.
8.	Address of the study programme implementation, indicating whether the study programme is implemented in the branches of the higher education institution / college	Rīga Stradiņš University, Dzirciema iela 16, Riga
9.	Degree, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification to be awarded	Doctor of Science (PhD) in Medicine and Health Sciences or Doctor of Science (PhD) in Social Sciences
10.	Date of study programme licensing	10.11.2021.
11.	Date of starting the implementation of the study programme	03.10.2022.
12.	Accreditation term of the study field	7.05.2024.

Analysis

1. Compliance of the study programme with the study field

The doctoral study programme “Health Care” (with sub-programmes “Medicine”, “Pharmacy” and “Psychology”) are run under the study field “Health Care”. The objective of the study field is to ensure all levels of up-to-date health care education necessary for the Latvian state and in the international environment fully complies with the aim of the study programme “Health Care” (*Description, p. 5, 8*), as well as the aims of sub-programmes, all are focused on the integrated, complementary and holistic approach that enables addressing current challenges related to human health, to prepare highly qualified scientists and teaching staff in the fields of health care in medicine, pharmacy and psychology in order to realise and independently manage research projects both in Latvia and internationally, as well as develop academic competence for ensuring the continuity and sustainability of education. The goals of the study field, study programme and sub-programmes closely related with the strategic priorities of RSU, which are in line with the Smart Specialisation Strategy (*Description, p. 5*) for the Biomedicine, Biopharmacy sector, excellence in personalised medicine, translational medicine, infectious diseases and biopharmaceutical fields, which are the main research fields of the doctoral students. Synergy-focused, holistic view developing and biopsychosocial approach oriented study programme „Health Care“ seeks to solve complex problems of crises and find solutions, how to cope with their consequences by integrating the clinical and health psychology potential of medicine, pharmacy and health into traditional biomedical and pharmaceutical models.

The additional explanation, provided to the experts before site visit, is saying that development of the interdisciplinary doctoral study programme “Health Care” took place in accordance with the RSU Study Program Development and Consolidation Plan agreed by the Ministry of Education and Science. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Science has expressed its support for the interdisciplinary doctoral study programme, stating that it corresponds to both

the spirit and essence of the reforms currently implemented by the Ministry, as well as the policy of implementing the new doctoral model.

The collaboration between healthcare and psychology experts in the “Health Care” study programme was illustrated in the presentation, made by RSU during the on-site visit: joint interdisciplinary publications (for example, Vrublevska, J., Perepjolkina, V., Martinsone, K., Kolesnikova, J., Krone, I., Smirnova, D., Fountoulakis K.,N., Rancans, E. (2022). Determinants of anxiety in the general Latvian population during the COVID-19 state of emergency. *Frontiers in Public health*, 10.DOI: 10.3389/fpubh.2022.854812 (SCOPUS and Web of Science), participation in conferences with joint presentations, improved approach to healthcare and psychology through mutual collaboration, interdisciplinary-jointly supervised dissertations (Kristīne Šneidere. Relationship between Cognitive Reserve, Cognitive Functioning and Brain Volumetry in Non-Demented Older Adults (Zina. Vad. Ainārs Stepens, Sara Mondini) (Psychology).

The Amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions were reviewed by the Education, Science and Culture Commission of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia on April 25, 2023. The amendments are applied to Article 55 with part nine of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, wording it as follows: “A university, by combining doctoral study programs of different fields of study, can form a multidisciplinary doctoral study program without specifying a field of study”, as well as to supplement the transitional provisions of the law with paragraph 103 “The provisions of this law on determining the directions of study in the study program do not apply to cases where the university, combining the doctoral study programs of different study fields, forms an interdisciplinary academic doctoral study program”.

The discussion during the meeting with the directors of the study programme “Health Care”, lead to the understanding that merging three sub-programmes to the one programme and having the sub-programme “Psychology” (representing different scientific field that other sub-programmes) in the study programme “Health Care” is perceived by the implementers of the study programme as the advantage, valuable experience of learning from each other, however, according to the representatives of HEI management (meeting with the HEI management), there were some challenges in transition process, mainly related with the lack of amendments of the law and organisation’s resistance to change. From the study quality perspective, as HEI management representatives mentioned, foreign students are the main indicators of the study quality. Academic staff representatives during the on-site visit also emphasised that working at the same time with the students from three different sub-programmes is a very interesting experience and a great challenge as well. It was clarified by RSU representatives after the visit, out of the 25 lecturers, in the implementation of each of the study programmes are involved: 20 lecturers in the sub-programme “Medicine”, 22 lecturers in the sub-programme “Pharmacy”, 21 lecturer in the sub-programme “Psychology”. Most lecturers are involved in the implementation of 2 or all 3 of the sub-programmes. It means the majority of lecturers are having an experience of interdisciplinary teaching.

From the perspective of the supervisors of the scientific works of students, the integral approach while working in the “Health Care” study programme is perceived as an old tradition rather than a new challenge. Students during the meeting with experts demonstrated a positive attitude towards interdisciplinary and individualised studies, they said, it is like looking at the problem

from different angles, a great possibility to get new experience, to build new courses according to your own individual research area.

The employers of the study programme emphasised a high need of psychology specialists in the hospital, which appears to be the health care setting, it is the proof of the compliance of the study programme, sub-programmes with the study field.

2. Compliance between the title of the study programme, the degree to be awarded and the qualification (if applicable).

The title of the Study Programme “Health Care” and the titles of sub-programmes comply with the degree to be awarded (Doctor of Sciences (*PhD*) in Medicine and Health Sciences upon graduation from the sub-programmes “Medicine” and “Pharmacy”. The graduates from the study programme “Psychology” are awarded by the degree Doctor of Sciences (*PhD*) in Social Sciences, which is compliant with the title of the “Health Care” study programme), it meets the requirements included in the regulatory framework: Cabinet regulations No. 595.

In addition, describing the logical connection between psychology and health sciences, it was mentioned in the additional remarks, provided by RSU, that the plan for improving the organisation of mental health care for the year 2023-2025, emphasises the involvement of the clinical and health psychologist (which is the focus of the RSU) in the multiprofessional team, cooperating with the family doctor, psychiatrist and other specialists in solving diverse health problems. In this plan, one of the directions of action envisages “evaluating the status of clinical and health psychologists in the field of health care” by 2025, including discussing the possibility of granting the status of treatment support person to clinical and health psychologists.

The academic staff representatives during the meeting with experts explained the relations among three sub-programmes, stating that the importance of psychology is emphasised in delivering courses of medicine and pharmacology. Psychology, as a behavioural medicine discipline, plays a crucial role in providing education in medicine and pharmacology. The students are having a growing interest in interdisciplinary science. The different aspects of science are seen. Teachers are preparing the application for the research project, there is a collaboration among the teachers of different departments and teachers, as well as the students. The teachers are having different discourses, it leads to tough discussions, because teachers come from different environments and have different backgrounds. Head of Internal medicine unit in hospital, working also at RSU as the PhD supervisor stated, that in medicine it is not possible to make science alone, collaboration in different scientific fields is unavoidable nowadays.

3. Compliance of the study programme indicators (study programme code, amount, implementation duration) with the learning outcomes defined for it.

Third cycle doctoral study programme “Health Care” complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 322 of July 13, 2017 “Regulations on the Classification of Education in Latvia”. Doctoral students complete the doctoral study programme in full-time studies within 4 years in accordance with the chosen sector. Sub-programme codes are defined according to the classification of education in Latvia: Medicine (51 721), Pharmacy (51 725), Psychology (51

313). The study courses of the study programme correspond to LQF/EQF level 8 (*Description, p. 18*). The compliance of the study programme and sub-programmes with the requirements of the Section 55 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions was analysed, and it was concluded that all the requirements necessary for obtaining the degree and sub-programmes of the study programme have been developed within the study programme, each of which corresponds to a specific field of science (*Description, p. 15*). Considering analyses included above, the experts believe that the sub-programmes are interconnected and there is a reason why they should be included in one study program, at the same time, if the external regulatory framework sets a limit to implement all three sub-programs within the framework of one study program, RSU should consider the possibility of implementing sub-programmes as specialisations. The study programme is developed for 4 years of duration, out of total 176 CP (264 ECTS) during studies, 78% (138 CP/207 ECTS) consists of research, while 22% (38 CP/57 ECTS) - study courses, knowledge dissemination, pedagogy and research mobility. The allocation of the credits and mapping of the outcomes of the study programme and study courses allows to state that the study programme and study courses correspond to the EQF/LQF Level 8. The analysis of mutual correspondence (mapping) of learning outcomes of the study programmes and study courses was performed while implementing experts' (licensing procedure) recommendation "to ensure a consistent and fair approach to granting of credit points" (Annex 11). Learning outcomes in the study programme and the study course descriptions are clearly and sequentially formulated in cooperation between the head of the study programme and the lecturers.

Some of the lecturers (meeting with the academic staff of the study programme) are delivering the teaching courses for the students of three sub-programmes at the time, they find it challenging to combine teaching the students of three different branches, obviously it requires special preparation. However, during the discussion, there was a lack of explanation how the study course description reflects the peculiarities of study methods applied (reflecting collaboration of the students from three sub-programmes) when the course is being taught simultaneously for the students from three different sub-programmes, and how the learning outcomes of the course are related with the learning outcomes with each of sub-programmes, as well as the study programme "Health Care".

Some of the employers, mainly hospital representatives, during the meeting with experts, expressed several ideas of widening the collaboration spectrum with RSU (new relevant study programme development, such as Value-based health care, Big data in healthcare, Modern healthcare management, collaboration in solving burnout and depression in healthcare sector), as well as a lack of the lacking competence of the graduates to communicate with the different patients, however the employers stated there is a lack of communication with the RSU representatives, so there is a risk of unused opportunities to strengthen collaboration with the main social partners. The employers confirmed the possibilities for the national and foreign students to get employed in the hospital, it means the learning outcomes are being successfully achieved.

Conclusions, strengths and weaknesses

It can be seen in the compliance of the aim of the study programme, sub-programmes and the study field and the compliance of the learning outcomes of the study programme, and strategic priorities of RSU, as well as the upcoming amendments of the law. In case the new amendments

to the law will not be adopted, it is possible to review the implementation of sub-programmes in the form of specialisations. The compliance also was witnessed by some of the academic staff representatives, appreciated by the majority of the students and employers. The learning outcomes of the study programme focuses on the current challenges related to human health and, which demands the specific solutions relevant to modern health care, however, there is a lack of clearness in the study course descriptions how the learning outcomes of the the learning outcomes of the course are related with the learning outcomes with each of sub-programmes, as well as the study programme “Health Care”. Also, the methods, developing the collaboration competence of the students of three sub-programmes, are not reflected in the course descriptions. Some of the employers expressed the great need of the specialists, especially psychology specialists in the hospital, however, and a wish to communicate more intensively in the development of future specialisations.

Strengths:

1. Interdisciplinarity and individualisation of the studies are perceived as the main strengths of the study programme, witnessed by all interested parties, in particular the students and employers.
2. Integration of the clinical and health psychology potential of medicine, pharmacy and health into traditional biomedical and pharmaceutical models widens the competences and provides the unique possibility for the students to get involved in the cross-sectoral scientific research projects.
3. The Ministry of Education and Science has expressed its support for the interdisciplinary doctoral study programme, stating that it corresponds to both the spirit and essence of the reforms currently implemented by the Ministry, as well as the policy of implementing the new doctoral model.
4. The employers of the study programme emphasised a high need of psychology specialists in the hospital, moreover, emphasised the need of widening collaboration with RSU.

Weaknesses:

1. According to the classification of science, psychology technically falls into another branch of science and the Law on Higher Education Institutions states that sub-programmes correspond to a specific branch of science, branch of economy or professional qualification to be obtained.
2. There is a lack of understanding how the learning outcomes of the course are related with the learning outcomes with each of sub-programmes, as well as the study programme “Health Care”.
3. There is a lack of reflexion in the study course descriptions what study methods are being applied (reflecting collaboration of the students from three sub-programmes) when the course is being taught simultaneously for the students from three different sub-programmes
4. There is a lack of communication with employers, in particular the hospital representatives, in discussing the lacking competences of the graduates as well as the development of future specialisations.

2. Topicality of the study programme

Analysis

1. The topicality of the study programme and the compliance of the content with the tendencies of the industry (area), the changes made since the licensing of the study programme.

The scientific doctoral study program in "Health Care" is a higher-level, third-cycle higher education program that ensures quality research, career advancement opportunities, and the preparation of academic staff. Since 2005, the doctoral programs in "Medicine" and "Pharmacy" have been successfully executed; nevertheless, program in "Psychology" is relatively new, having only received its licence in 2016. The rationale behind combining these three programs into the doctoral study program "Health Care" was indicated as the implementation of the Plan for Development and Consolidation of Study Programmes of RSU adopted in 2018 and developed within the project "Reducing study program fragmentation and promoting study internationalisation at RSU as well as a necessity for cross-sector scientific research as nearly all medical fields today have a sound understanding of clinical and health psychology, the integration of research methodologies, resource efficiency, and collaboration with industry experts. This may provide a new level of researchers and professionals who will have the chance to transition from internal issues in sectors to challenging issues related to the health care of the population.

Doctoral study sub-programs in "Medicine" and "Pharmacy" comply with the Health science field. Whereas, in general, the doctoral sub-program in "Psychology" belongs to the Social science field. These three doctoral sub-programs are all part of the doctoral study program "Health Care" at RSU, demonstrating that the research for the doctoral sub-program in "Psychology" is solely based on clinical psychology and health psychology research studies (e.g. "Mental practices and experiences as resources or a threat to self-help in oncology patients during chemotherapy", "Creation of digital intervention to promote primary prevention of cardiovascular diseases in Latvian cultural environment", "Burnout of medical practitioners and factors affecting it during the COVID-19 pandemic" and "Changes in emotional regulation skills in adults with symptoms of depression after participating in the mobile app approbation and improvement in the self-help EMORI programme").

The principles that supported the development of the content of the interdisciplinary doctoral study program "Health Care" were based on the Salzburg Seminar of the third cycle of the Bologna Process to promote the research excellence and careers of doctoral degree candidates. The doctoral study program "Health Care" is supported by the European region strategic policy documents in health care of the World Health Organization, European Union strategic documents in education, as well as the development progress and needs of the Latvian state and economy, as well as the RSU strategy to provide excellent educational and research opportunities. This program provides doctoral students with the opportunity to carry out both industry-relevant and original research (for example, during the visit to the Laboratory of Finished Dosage Forms) with the research infrastructure that has been greatly expanded and modernised.

Since the study programme was granted licensing, the restricted elective study courses and the mandatory study section (A) have remained unchanged. In addition, RSU has attracted industry leaders to a number of study courses (to a doctoral seminar: the Head of the RSU Scientific

Laboratory of Molecular Genetics, lead researcher Linda Gailīte; psycho-oncologist Prof. Angelos Cassiani and researcher Daiga Kamerāde from Salford to a study course "Scientific Writing and Scientific Communication").

The doctoral study program "Health Care" recommendations of licencing experts are regarded as important improvements and have been taken into consideration, e.g., an online survey evaluating the academic program's content and the teaching staff's activities, a combined meeting with doctorate students will be held at least once a year to discuss the format and organisation of the research process. Several Part B and Part C study courses were started because of survey results and online discussion. The seminars provided by the RSU Center for Educational Growth for the development of transversal abilities have a significant impact on how competent doctorate thesis supervisors are able to supervise students. Qualified international teaching staff were involved in delivering doctoral student seminars to improve the doctoral program's quality standards.

2. Dynamics of the student number and prospects of employment for graduates.

The doctoral study program "Health Care" received its licence recently, and the implementation of the program's first year and enrolment of students started last autumn for both the Latvian and English groups for the academic year 2022-2023. A total of 40 students were registered: 1 in the English group (medical sector) and 39 in the Latvian groups (31 in the "Medicine" sub-programme, 4 in the "Pharmacy" sub-programme, and 4 in the "Psychology" sub-programme). It is observed that the new doctoral study program "Health Care" accepted students from the previously implemented doctoral study programs "Medicine" and "Pharmacy": overall, 84 students were transferred, 5 in the "Pharmacy" and 79 in the "Medicine" sub-programs. Whereas 4 students of the doctoral study program "Psychology" were not transferred to the new doctoral study program "Health Care", they will continue to study in the previous program. According to the "Description," no new students are enrolled in the doctoral study program "Psychology" during the 2022–2023 academic year. Additional information received indicates that RSU plans to discontinue its doctoral study program "Psychology" and Study Quality Commission approves it In November 2023.

Another metric is the number of graduates; previous years indicate that from the "Medicine" sub-programme, 19 to 25 doctorate students graduate, from the "Pharmacy" sub-programme, 1–3, and from the "Psychology" sub-programme, 2 graduates. Doctoral studies are mainly discontinued at the student's own decision and do not resume after an academic leave, mostly because of social and economic conditions. To motivate doctoral students who are on academic leave to complete their studies, a communication strategy could be developed. Doctoral students take part in networks and initiatives for research directed by faculty at RSU and other collaborators. According to doctoral study sub-programmes in the doctoral study program "Health Care", a number of doctoral students take advantage of research mobility opportunities during their studies, including sub-programme "Psychology", but these numbers may be higher in all programs and particularly in sub-program Medicine. It must be noted that the "Psychology" doctoral study program hosted an incoming Erasmus mobility student from Klaipeda University in Lithuania during the 2019–2020 academic year. Doctoral students in the sub-programs of "medicine" and "pharmacy, " but not those in the sub-program of "psychology," use conference attendance grants for their participation in international conferences. In the sub-program "Medicine," collaboration with industry and private medical institutions is increased, e.g. Digestive Diseases Centre “Gastro”, Veselības centrs 4, E. Gulbja laboratorija, AS “Veselības centru apvienība”. The Latvian Institute of

Organic Synthesis (LIOS) and the Latvian Biomedical Research and Study Centre (LBRSC) work with doctoral students in the "Pharmacy" subprogram to conduct research and prepare for future employment. Sub-programme "Psychology" has cooperation with professional organisations; no other specifics are mentioned in the Description. During a visit, an East University Hospital medical director noted the need for psychologists in clinics, particularly at the oncology unit, and the availability of PhD research positions in the department of science. The hospital may consider creating a job opening for a clinical psychologist in the future. Meetings with RSU doctoral studies sub-program coordinators on a regular basis are anticipated by the hospital.

Conclusions, strengths and weaknesses

Evidence for the health science focus of all the study sub-programs can be found in the RSU doctoral study program "Health Care," which has started in the autumn of 2022. The clinical and health psychology component of the PhD sub-program in "Psychology" has been demonstrated. The sub-programs "Psychology" and "Medicine" and "Pharmacy" should continue to forge close linkages in terms of research activities. Doctoral students in the Latvian and English groups are enrolled in the PhD study program "Health Care". The doctoral study program "Health Care" has implemented the recommendations and significantly improved since being licensed.

Strengths:

1. Multidisciplinary approach to health science research (medicine, pharmacy, and psychology) is used for solving hot issues in health science.
2. Provides the possibility of integrating clinical and health psychology into public health and health care in connection with biomedical and pharmaceutical models.
3. Several international leaders have been attracted to the courses.
4. Emphasis on feedback (discussion and survey) from doctoral students, the teaching staff, and thesis supervisors about the study process and new research skills.
5. An international environment is beginning to be established in the doctoral study program "Health Care" with the participation of one doctoral student in the English group of the sub-program "Medicine".

Weaknesses:

1. There is no detailed plan in place for the long-term research interactions between the "Psychology" sub-program and the "Medicine" and "Pharmacy" sub-programs.
2. The latter semesters of the doctoral program have the highest student dropout rates.
3. Low number of students that have graduated from the previous doctoral program "Psychology".
4. Doctoral students' research mobility is low.

3. Resources and provision

Requirement [R1]: Compliance of the study base, science base (if applicable), information base (including library), material and technical base and financial base with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and for ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes.

Analysis

Learning outcomes can be met with the assurance of a suitable study and research environment. The doctoral study program "Health Care" attracts high-level academic staff and foreign visiting lecturers, provides study courses and research work with the required literature and methodological materials, provides a means for doctoral students to take part in research projects, involves students in the teaching process, supplies e-resources, e-book databases, full-text databases of journals, research infrastructure, and doctoral grants. RSU has status as the lead partner of the National Significance Research Centre of Public Health and Clinical Medicine (Centre).

All of the relevant details concerning studies and the academic process, as well as the various services the university offers, are available on MyRSU and e-studies (open source learning management platform *Moodle*). *MyRSU* is linked to the *Moodle* platform. PhD students have access to both the courses of the current semester and previous semesters. RSU uses *Turnitin* database. For the medical sciences sector, RSU provides four subscribed e-book databases (*ebook Academic Collection (EBSCO)*, *Ebook Central (Proquest)*, *AccessMedicine and ClinicalKey*) and seven full-text databases of journals that refer to pharmacy and medicine fields. Subscribed databases by RSU, such as *SAGE Premier 2022*, *Health Research Premium Collection (Proquest)*, *MEDLINE Complete (EBSCO)*, *BMJ Journals*, *Wiley Online Journals*, *Science Direct*, and *Academic Search Complete (EBSCO)*, offer the full texts of scientific articles in medicine. There are four evidence-based medical databases available for students and academic staff: *ClinicalKey Clinical Overviews (Elsevier)*, *The Cochrane Library (Wiley)*, *DynaMed (EBSCO)*, and *UpToDate (Wolters Kluwer)*. For the pharmaceutical sector, a specific database of e-books in *AccessPharmacy* is provided that contains an educational source in pharmacology and pharmacy, providing textbooks, video materials, information on medicines, ect. In addition, in the psychological sciences section, a specific database, *PsycARTICLES* is provided. E-books in psychology can be found in the following databases: *ebook Academic Collection (EBSCO)*, *Ebook Central (Proquest)*, *AccessMedicine and ClinicalKey*. Subscribed databases: *PsycARTICLES*, *SAGE Premier 2022*, *Health Research Premium Collection (Proquest)*, *MEDLINE Complete (EBSCO)*, *BMJ Journals*, *Wiley Online Journals*, *Science Direct*, *Communication Source (EBSCO)*, *Sociology Source Ultimate (EBSCO)*, *Academic Search Complete (EBSCO)* by RSU offer the full texts of scientific articles in the psychology field. On its website, the Library of RSU, in the section "List of recommended e-textbooks" has placed a general summary list of the e-books, including such sections as "Pharmacology and toxicology", "Pharmacy, pharmaceutical chemistry", "Biostatistics", "Research methods", "Psychology", "Health Education", "Health Communication", "Psychiatry", "Education and pedagogy". PhD students can access electronic databases from anywhere using the e-Databases section of the MyRSU site. Study materials, video lecture recordings, and all student assessments are available in the e-study courses. An on-site visit to the RSU library confirmed

that there is both access to educational and research e-sources as well as up-to-date library premises for doctoral students. Many of the study courses in the doctoral study program "Health Care" have e-books included in their descriptions, however the databases where these specific e-books may be located are not provided. Research journals that are pertinent to students' learning processes could be mentioned in the study course descriptions as well.

Recently, RSU has opened the National Significance Research Centre of Public Health and Clinical Medicine, future Laboratory of Finished Dosage Forms (LFDF), Baltic Biomaterials Centre of Excellence and Psychology Laboratory—a new scientific infrastructure with premises and equipment for the pharmaceutical sciences sector—and has established a research partnership with LLU for the purpose of developing veterinary dosage forms using medicinal herbs. RSU uses the co-financing from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to develop pharmaceutical research infrastructure for the solid dosage form development unit and standardisation unit that will support the research and training of students in the field of industrial pharmaceutical technology. The Institute of Oncology (Breast Tumour Department, Hereditary Cancer Research Department etc.; confocal microscope, *multiplex Luminex* 200, laser, *FRET* system for direct immunology research, computer program complex for systems medicine *geneXplain*, etc), Laboratory of Molecular Genetics, Science Hub "Kleisti" (Institute of Microbiology and Virology, Institute of Occupational Safety and Environmental Health, Laboratory of Biochemistry, Joint Laboratory of Clinical Immunology and Immunogenetics, and Laboratory of Biomechanics - 64 researchers and lab employees; the installed technology is valued at 2,173,185 euros) and Institute of Public Health, all have modern scientific equipment available for doctoral students' research sections in medical sciences. The Baltic Biomaterials Centre of Excellence (*BBCE*) at RSU, which is planned to be cooperation-based with abroad and Latvian institutions and industry, is mentioned for this doctoral program (medical and pharmacy section).

The RSU Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy collaborates with institutions in Latvia and abroad, making it a point to learn new techniques and tools to raise the standard of research. The development of doctoral theses involves collaboration with a number of organisations, healthcare facilities, including the Latvian National Armed Forces (NAF) and Riga East University Hospital (REUH) (Sector of psychological sciences). In the supervision of PhD theses two foreign professors are involved. At RSU, a Psychology Laboratory is in operation to ensure that psychological research and evaluation tools are developed and to offer advice to academic staff and students. The study programme in Latvian in sub-programmes "Medicine" (128 students in all the years of studies, and 33 in the first year) and "Pharmacy" (13 students in all the years of studies, and 5 in the first year) is funded from state budget funds for higher education, and financing of individuals or legal entities is possible. In contrast, the sub-programme "Psychology" (12 students in all the years of studies, and 4 in the first year) is funded from the financing of individuals or legal entities. The study program in English can be paid for with funding from both individuals and legal entities, with an annual tuition price of EUR 20,000. The funding is used for staff remuneration, attract guest university lecturers, pay taxes, maintain the IT infrastructure, provide grants for doctoral studies, buy equipment and devices, pay for research visits, and cover other related expenses. Several units (the RSU Department of Doctoral Studies, the Language Centre, the Department of Clinical Skills and Medical Technologies, the Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy, the Department of Public Health and Epidemiology, the Department of Humanities and the Statistical Unit of the

RSU Faculty of Medicine) take part in the implementation of this study program. These structural units have a 3.0 million euro budget overall. At RSU, doctoral study grant funding for 4 years of studies may be obtained for the sub-program "Medicine" (12 thousand EUR per 1 students) and the sub-program "Pharmacy" (up to 8 thousand EUR per 1 students), see "Description of the Study Programme" pp. 41. Since the start of the study program's implementation, there haven't been any changes to this provision.

Conclusions, strengths and weaknesses

RSU provides various up-to-date resources for the doctoral study program "Health Care", e.g. electronic resources, including e-book databases and full-text journal databases, are provided to support the PhD study program. RSU offers a list of suggested e-textbooks for students to easily search. Individual doctoral grants are provided by RSU and used by doctoral students in the sub-programs "Medicine" and "Pharmacy". There are several research institutes providing infrastructure and support for practical work on doctoral theses. For doctoral students, a catalog of scientific equipment and can apply this equipment in their scientific activity. This complex of activities provided by RSU for the doctoral students of the doctoral program "Health Care" provides the basis for achieving the learning outcomes.

Strengths:

1. A wide range of e-resources, e-book databases, and full-text databases of journals are provided for doctoral students of all sub-programs in the study program "Health Care".
2. Doctoral study grants are available to students in the sub-programs "Medicine" and "Pharmacy".
3. Modern research infrastructure and premises are available for doctoral students.

Weaknesses:

1. Relevant research journals are not referred to, and e-book databases are not linked to the stated e-books in the course descriptions.
2. No doctoral study grants are provided for the sub-program "Psychology".

Evaluation of the requirement [R1]:

Requirement	Compliance			Justification
	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	
Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), information provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and for ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes.	X			To achieve the learning outcomes, appropriate information, materials, and technical, scientific, and financial bases are provided.

Requirement [R2]: Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements of the laws and regulations.

Analysis

Thematic cycles, seminars, guest lectures, conferences, discussions, and other educational events are organised by RSU CEG and are open to all RSU faculty members without charge. Two visiting lecturers Dr. Angelos Kassianos (Cyprus University of Technology, in spring semester of 2022 was invited for the course DN_178 “Doctoral seminar “Methodology and Methods of Elaborating Doctoral Thesis”) and Dr. Daiga Kamerde (University of Salford; was invited for the doctoral study course DN_205 “Scientific Writing and Scientific Communication”) were asked to deliver for the implementation of study courses for the academic year 2022–2023. The course "Oncopsychology" by Dr. Angelos Kassianos is planned to be delivered in the spring semester of 2023.

The teaching staff selection process in RSU has established the following qualification standards: scientific doctoral degree (*PhD*) in medicine and health sciences or in social sciences; active scientists, LCS experts; pedagogical work experience; preferred involvement in scientific projects; understanding of English (at least B2) relevant to job duties; proper digital proficiency; however, in some instances, lecturers who possess essential competencies and skills, as well as practical experience in the delivery of study programs, but whose scientific credentials fall short of one or more requirements, may be drawn to the Doctoral study program. The doctorate study program is being implemented by 25 lecturers, 23 of whom hold PhD degrees and 19 lecturers are approved experts of the Latvian Science Council (LSC) (4 LCP experts in Clinical Medicine; 4 LCP experts in Health and sports sciences; 4 LCP experts in Medical sciences, including pharmacy; 3 LCP experts in Psychology; 2 LCP experts in Education Sciences; for more detailed info in annex Annex 6.4) and participate in professional organisations, both locally and internationally. It would be prudent to attract LSC experts in medical biotechnology and forensic science. The majority of lecturers are active in implementing two or all three of the sub-programmes - the following 25 lecturers are involved in the delivery of each sub program: 20 lecturers in the sub-programme "Medicine," 22 in the sub-programme "Pharmacy," and 21 in the sub-programme "Psychology." Lecturers participate in *Erasmus plus* mobility teaching at foreign higher education institutions (the Doctoral School of the Faculty of Medicine of the Vilnius University, March 2022). Erasmus+ agreements for the exchange of students and staff with 45 institutions in various European nations have been made under the study direction "Health Care". Numerous lecturers, primarily in the field of psychology, have written or collaborated on scientific monographs. There are currently 8 professors, 5 associate professors, 2 assistant professors, 1 lecturer, and 2 lead researchers in the sub-program "Medicine". In the sub-program "Pharmacy" there are 8 professors, 6 associate professors, 3 assistant professors, 1 lecturer, and 2 Lead researchers. The sub-program "Psychology" has 7 professors, 5 associate professors, 4 assistant professors, 1 lecturer, and 1 lead researcher. The study course "English in Science," which is taught by associate visiting professor (Ventspils University of Applied Sciences) Dr. Philol. G. Dreijers, was developed in response to student suggestions for the content of the new doctoral study program. In doctoral seminars, students' competencies are reinforced. Most study course lectures are given online, which is appreciated by doctorate students.

RSU professors frequently take part in research projects (international projects: NRP, FARP, ERANET), give presentations at scholarly conferences, and take part in foreign conferences. Lecturers are highly cited internationally. Many lecturers serve on the editorial boards of scientific journals and participate in funded research projects. Several lecturers have Hirsch indexes above 10. RSU cooperates with scientific institutes, for example, the LIOS Laboratory of Pharmaceutical Pharmacology.

Conclusions, strengths and weaknesses

The academic staff working on putting the doctoral study program into action is highly qualified that complies with legal requirements and study program implementation guidelines, ensuring that the goals and learning outcomes of the individual study courses are met.

Strengths:

1. At RSU, the qualifications standards for choosing the academic staff have been set.
2. Many of the academic staff members of the doctoral study program are recognized experts by the Latvian Science Council (LSC).
3. Academic staff take part in international and national research initiatives, and they also participate in Erasmus plus mobility teaching at foreign higher education institutions.
4. To raise the standard of the doctoral study program "Health Care", two foreign visiting lecturers and a visiting associate professor from Ventspils University are involved.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of LSC experts in medical biotechnology and forensic science.

Evaluation of the requirement [R2]:

Requirement	Compliance			Justification
	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	
Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements of the laws and regulations.	X			Both the academic personnel and the visiting staff have excellent qualifications. Qualification standards are used in the RSU selection procedure for the teaching staff. Teaching staff members serve as LSP experts in all major sectors, including clinical

				medicine, psychology, the medical sciences including pharmacy, and educational sciences.
--	--	--	--	---

Requirement [R3]: The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or artistic creation (if applicable).

Analysis

Doctoral study programme “Health Care” is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science. The teaching staff of the study programme demonstrate high qualification by participation in well known international studies, such as CSB, international *EUROSTAT* monitoring on a regular basis (*Description*, p. 44). The scientific outcomes are integrated in the teaching course “Epidemiology Part I and Epidemiology Part II”, it complies with the learning outcomes of the study programme and significantly contributes to the development of the scientific area of health sciences. Academic staff representatives are the authors of the monographs, devoted to scientific aspects of psychology (*Description*, p. 45), scientific publications in SCI journals, forming knowledge society, integrating the results of scientific research in teaching courses and contributing to the learning outcomes of the study programme. The main research directions provided in the *Description*, p. 48, are clinical medicine, basic medical sciences including pharmacy, medical biotechnology, health and sports sciences, forensic medicine and psychology.

As it was already discussed in the Chapter number 1 (Compliance of the study programme with the study field), the collaboration between healthcare and psychology experts in the “Health Care” study programme and the common scientific research results, as the outcome of doctoral studies, were reflected in joint interdisciplinary publications (for example, Vrublevska, J., Perepjolkina, V., Martinsone, K., Kolesnikova, J., Krone, I., Smirnova, D., Fountoulakis K., N., Rancans, E. (2022). Determinants of anxiety in the general Latvian population during the COVID-19 state of emergency. *Frontiers in Public health*, 10.DOI: 10.3389/fpubh.2022.854812 (SCOPUS and Web of Science), participation in conferences with joint presentations, improved approach to healthcare and psychology through mutual collaboration, interdisciplinary-jointly supervised dissertations (Kristīne Šneidere. Relationship between Cognitive Reserve, Cognitive Functioning and Brain Volumetry in Non-Demented Older Adults (Zina. Vad. Ainārs Stepens, Sara Mondini) (Psychology).

All research directions for obtaining a doctoral degree correspond to the fields of science defined by the Cabinet of Ministers. The vast majority of lecturers are actively involved in research projects, preparation of applications and implementation of ongoing projects. The great value of this experience is the involvement of the students in these activities. Some of the lecturers of the study programme “Pharmacy” are involved in project evaluation commissions, it ensures that state-of-art knowledge is provided for the doctoral students and contributes to the development of health sciences.

During the meeting with the experts, some of the academic staff representatives confirmed that the lecturers of the study programme at the same time are working a scientific work as the researchers, it ensures only the newest scientific findings are used for teaching and updating the courses. Moreover, the academic staff members are working in the interdisciplinary teams of researchers and students, while preparing the applications of scientific projects, however the students reflected the wish to get more involved in the practical tasks related to project application preparation.

To recognize the successful completion of the four-year doctoral study program, performed scientific work (on the subject of the doctoral thesis) must meet at least one of the following criteria: for example, 'Two anonymously reviewed scientific publications in scientific journals or conference proceedings indexed in the *SCOPUS* or *Web of Science* or included in the ERIH+ database; or - one anonymously reviewed scientific publication in a scientific edition or conference proceedings indexed in the *SCOPUS* or *Web of Science* or included in the ERIH+ database and a reviewed scientific monograph on one scientific topic or problem and it contains a bibliography.' The requirement for a PhD student to conduct research to serve as the first author of any of those two publications described above is not stated. During the onsite visit, invited students confirmed that they were first authors on papers. Nevertheless, it is advantageous to lay out the expectations and obligations for publishing papers in clear terms for all students. Discussions during an on-site visit revealed that students with backgrounds in biology who may be attracted for studies in the doctoral program "Health Care " could potentially work as researchers for the university and its affiliated institutes in the future.

Conclusions, strengths and weaknesses

The achievements of the representatives of academic staff ensure the state-of-art content of the study programme and the sub-programmes. Inclusion of the students to the lecturers' scientific and project activities gives the possibility to integrate the results of scientific activity in the study process. All research directions for obtaining a doctoral degree correspond to the fields of science defined by the Cabinet of Ministers. Academic staff representatives and students confirmed the doctoral studies are based on the newest scientific findings, which are reflected in the scientific publications (interdisciplinary ones as well), monographs, scientific presentations, and topics of the doctoral dissertations. However, the requirement for a PhD student to conduct research to serve as the first author of any of the two publications, is not stated.

Strengths:

1. Highly qualified staff team includes the experts in methodology and other study programme-related courses, who have confirmed their qualification in the form of internationally cited interdisciplinary publications and by working effectively in scientific project teams at international and national levels.
2. The scientific achievements of the lecturers are reflected in the content of the study programme, as well as in joint interdisciplinary publications, joint presentations and jointly supervised dissertations.

Weaknesses:

1. Insufficient involvement of the students in the preparation of the applications of scientific research projects.
2. For example, "Two anonymously reviewed scientific publications in scientific journals or conference proceedings indexed in the SCOPUS or Web of Science or included in the ERIH+" are currently the requirements for successfully completing the four-year doctoral study program. Scientific articles that have undergone peer review and been published in journals adhere to stricter standards and have higher thesis quality, not the case with conference proceedings.
3. There is a shortage of students with a background in biology studying in the PhD program "Health Care."

Evaluation of the requirement [R3]:

Requirement	Compliance			Justification
	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	
The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or artistic creation (if applicable).	X			Involvement of the academic staff in scientific activities and the outcomes of this involvement, such as scientific publications and monographs, which are used in the study process in the doctoral study programme "Health Care" proves the sufficient substantiation of the study programme content by the newest achievements of the respective field of science. Suggestion for further improvement - more active involvement of the students in scientific projects.

Requirement [R4]: Compliance of the study programme with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other laws and regulations.

No.	Requirement	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	Justification
1.	<p>The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard, including the minimum requirements for the content of the compulsory civil protection course and the content of civil protection training for employees specified for the implementation of the study programme.</p> <p>The study courses of the professional study programmes include a module for the development of professional competence of entrepreneurship in the amount of at least 6 CP, if it has not been acquired in the previous professional study programme or is not included in the theoretical basic courses of the study programme branch (field of professional activity).</p>	X			The study plan includes the study course "Civil and environmental protection" at points 16 and 36. The doctoral student can choose the course according to their individual study plan – during the 2nd, 3rd or 4th semester, if they have not finished it during their previous studies (Annex 17.1; Annex 19).
2.	The study programme complies with a valid professional (occupational) standard, or with the requirements of professional qualification (if it is not necessary to develop a professional standard for the profession), if a professional qualification is awarded after acquisition of the study programme				<i>Not applicable</i>
3.	The code of the study programme complies with the Cabinet regulations on the Latvian Education Classification	X			Sub-programme codes are defined according to the classification of education in Latvia: Medicine (51721),

					Pharmacy (51725), Psychology (51313). According to 13.06.2017. Cabinet regulations No. 322 on the Latvian Education Classification, the last three digits of the codes correspond to the following program groups (721 - Medicine; 725 - Pharmacy; 313 - Psychology).
4.	The qualification of the teaching staff ¹ complies with the conditions and requirements set for the implementation of the study programme, which are specified in the regulatory enactments in the field of education including the participation in the implementation of an academic study programme of at least five professors and associate professors together who have been elected to academic positions in the respective higher education institution, except in the cases provided for in Section 55, Part two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.	X			<p>25 lecturers are involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme (out of 25 lecturers: 20 lecturers in the sub-programme “Medicine”, 22 lecturers in the sub-programme “Pharmacy”, 21 lecturer in the sub-programme “Psychology”). Most lecturers are involved in the implementation of 2 or all 3 of the sub-programmes. 23 out of 25 are holding doctoral degrees, 21 of whom have been elected to academic positions. Out of 21 representatives of the academic staff, there are 9 professors and 7 associate professors (Annexes 24.6, 24.7, 6.1.).</p> <p>Sub-programme “Medicine”:</p> <p>15 elected to academic positions in the relevant higher education institution (9 professors, 6 associate professors);</p>

¹ As used in this document, the term “teaching staff” refers to the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting lecturers, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants of the corresponding higher education institution / college.

					<p>Sub-programme “Pharmacy”:</p> <p>18 elected to academic positions in the relevant higher education institution (9 professors, 7 associate professors);</p> <p>Sub-programme “Psychology”:</p> <p>12 elected to academic positions in the relevant higher education institution (8 professors, 4 associate professors);</p>
5.	Confirmation of the higher education institution/college that 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, according to the European Language Proficiency Assessment levels (the division of levels is available on the website www.europass.lv), if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language or proficiency of the Latvian language at least on the B2 level, if the study programme or a part thereof is intended to be implemented in the Latvian language and the lecturer has not acquired secondary or higher education in the Latvian language.	X			<p>According to Annex 6.1., all (25) teaching staff representatives declare at least B2-level English language knowledge, as well as knowledge of the official language complies with the Cabinet Regulations No 733 (Confirmation statements No 60-6/258/2021 and 3-DPAD-6/52/2023).</p>
6.	The study programme, which is intended to be implemented in a foreign language, complies with the requirements of Section 56, Part three of the Law on Higher Education Institutions	X			<p>The RSU's ability to implement the program in English, as well as the certification of the teaching staff's English language proficiency level of at least B2, was confirmed by licensing experts.</p>

					Additionally, within the framework of current procedure, the experts have not obtained any information that would call into question RSU ability to implement the study program in English.
7.	The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement (if applicable).	X			The sample of the study agreement was prepared for licensing, not changed.
8.	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 (if applicable).	X			The sample of the diploma was prepared for licensing, not changed.
9.	The higher education institution/ college has confirmed that it 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 (if applicable).	X			<p>The document was prepared for licensing, not changed.</p> <p>It was additionally clarified after the on-site visit that RSU has reached an agreement with the University of Latvia that in the event of suspension of the implementation of RSU doctoral study programme “Health Care” (including the sub-programmes “Medicine” or “Pharmacy”), the University of Latvia commits to provide students studying in the sub-programmes “Medicine” or “Pharmacy” with opportunity to continue their studies in the doctoral study programme “Medicine and Pharmacy”. According to the information available on AIKA e-platform, the aforementioned title of the doctoral study programme “Medicine and Health</p>

					Sciences” could be new, changed during the accreditation process from the previous doctoral study programme title “Medicine and Pharmacy”, because the new title appears in the documentation available on the platform – both in the study programme description and the expert evaluation. The new study programme title is also provided on the UL website, however a detailed description of the study programme is only available with the previous title. RSU and UL should review the contract on the transfer of students, anticipating the changes made in the UL programme.
10.	The higher education institution/ college has confirmed that it 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 omissions) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme (if applicable).	X			The document was prepared for licensing, not changed.
11.	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.	X			Out of 25 lecturers in the doctoral study programme “Health Care”, 19 lecturers are experts approved of the Latvian Science Council (LSC) (<i>Description, p. 44</i>) Sub-programme “Medicine”:

	At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).				<p>15 elected to academic positions in the relevant higher education institution (9 professors, 6 associate professors);</p> <p>18 with a doctoral degree in total, 4 LCP experts in Clinical Medicine and 4 LCP experts in Health and Sports sciences.</p> <p>Sub-programme “Pharmacy”:</p> <p>18 elected to academic positions in the relevant higher education institution (9 professors, 7 associate professors);</p> <p>20 with a doctoral degree in total, 4 LCP experts in Medical sciences, including pharmacy.</p> <p>Sub-programme “Psychology”:</p> <p>12 elected to academic positions in the relevant higher education institution (8 professors, 4 associate professors);</p> <p>19 with a doctoral degree in total, 3 LCP experts in Psychology.</p>
12.	The scientific and pedagogical qualification of doctors of science complies with the criteria specified in the regulatory enactments regarding the evaluation of the scientific and pedagogical qualification of a candidate for the position of a professor and an associate professor (if applicable).	X			<p>High qualification of the academic staff, which corresponds to the study programme implementation conditions and legal requirements, is achieved by applying clear and detailed qualification requirements in the teaching staff selection process: scientific doctoral degree (<i>PhD</i>) in medicine</p>

					<p>and health sciences or in social sciences is required, being active scientists and LCS experts, having prior pedagogical work experience, preferable participation in scientific projects, working groups and popularisation of science, English language proficiency level (at least B2), proper digital skills (<i>Description, p. 42</i>).</p> <p>Annex 27 confirms that the scientific and teaching qualification of the PhD holders meet the criteria laid down in the laws and regulations regarding the assessment of the scientific and teaching qualification of a candidate for the post of a professor and associate professor (Annex 24.6 and 24.7). Recommendation for further improvement - more LCS experts could be involved in the sub-programme “Psychology”.</p>
13.	The joint study programme complies with the requirements prescribed in Section 55 ¹ , of the Law on the Higher Education Institutions (if applicable).				<i>Not applicable</i>
14	Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 1001 “Procedure and criteria for the awarding of a scientific doctoral degree” and regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 1000 “Regulations on the delegation of the right to award doctoral degrees to universities”.	X			Programme complies with the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 1001 “Procedure and criteria for the awarding of a scientific doctoral degree” and regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 1000 “Regulations on the delegation of the right to award doctoral degrees to universities”.

Evaluation of the requirement [R4]:

Requirement	Compliance			Justification
Compliance of the study programme with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other laws and regulations.	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	Doctoral study programme “Health Care” and sub-programmes “Medicine”, “Pharmacy” and “Psychology” complies with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other laws and regulations.
	X			

4. Implementation of the recommendations received during the licensing of the study programme

Assessment of the implementation of the recommendations provided by the licensing experts of the study programme.

Analysis

There were six short-term recommendations provided by the licensing experts for the improvement of the study programme. Almost all (five out of six) recommendations were implemented until 09.11.2021. Eleven long-term recommendations for the improvement of the study programme until accreditation of the study direction were provided by the licensing experts. All the recommendations are being implemented throughout the period, according to the plan of implementation of recommendations of licensing experts of the doctoral study programme “Health Care ” (*Annex 11*). Regular training and experience exchange activities are continuing to improve constantly the skills of doctoral thesis supervisors, the action plan for the involvement of foreign lecturers was developed and is being implemented, and the number of cooperation agreements with other Latvian universities is planned to increase, additional criteria for selection of the teaching staff was introduced - participation in scientific projects, the doctoral grant regulations are being updated regularly, the new system - the growth portal RSU Growth was introduced, it helps heads and employees effectively implement the work performance management process needed to boost employee growth, development of competences, and improvement of job quality in conjunction with the RSU’s strategic objectives. While responding to the recommendation “to discuss study quality assessment

questionnaires with students, and, on the basis of proposals, provided by students, to improve questionnaires, as well as review the feedback mechanism for students and implementation of useful recommendations", feedback reception mechanisms, oral and written surveys, have been established enabling doctoral students to participate in quality monitoring of the study programme. Remuneration system of RSU academic staff is being reviewed each year, aiming to create the system of incentive remuneration and urging academic staff to participate actively in the scientific activities of RSU, the extension of intersectoral mobility is constantly being implemented, the possibilities to use remote teaching tools were expanded (in accordance with the epidemiological situation in the country), the proportion of defended papers with sets of scientific articles was increased (sub-programmes "Medicine" and "Pharmacy", as the response to the long-term recommendation to increase the role of a doctoral student in conducting of scientific work and drawing up of a scientific article thus requiring the doctoral student to provide sufficient scientific input for the doctoral student to be the first author of at least two doctoral articles. To allow for the prospect of growing pharmaceutical science, new facilities and equipment have been acquired. There were separate sets of recommendations provided by the licensing experts for the improvement of the sub-programmes "Medicine", "Pharmacy" and "Psychology", and, according to the information, provided in the Annex 11, all of them (30 in total) were taken to the account and are being implemented throughout the planned period of time.

Conclusions, strengths and weaknesses

Thirty recommendations were provided by licensing experts and experts in the evaluation of doctoral study programmes of the study field "Health Care", all of them were taken into account and the specific measures are being implemented in order to improve the study programme and sub-programmes according to the experts' recommendations.

Strengths

1. RSU regularly reviews the requirements for obtaining a doctoral degree. An increase in scientific articles has been noted in the sub-programmes "Medicine" and "Pharmacy".
2. Doctoral students participate in the quality assurance of the study program using the recently developed feedback reception techniques, which include oral and written surveys.
3. The doctoral study program "Health Care" is being implemented with increased participation from foreign professors.

Weaknesses

1. Even though a working committee was formed in March 2022 to create a long-term mobility development strategy, doctoral mobility has not increased yet.

III. Assessment of the study programme

Excellent	<u>Good</u>	Average	Poor
-----------	-------------	---------	------

IV. Recommendations

The experts recommend to include the doctoral study programme “Health care” in the study field “Health care”.

On a short-term basis

1. It is recommended that the majority of the study program's lectures remain online based on feedback from students and academic staff.
2. Doctoral study grants for sub-program "Psychology" students should be more stipulated.
3. To update the study course description's template by introducing the section “Interrelations of the learning outcomes of the study course, sub-programme and study programme”.
4. To update the study methods (the main focus on collaboration of the students of three sub-programmes) of the study courses in the study course descriptions, which are simultaneously delivered to the students of three sub-programmes.
5. The descriptions of doctoral study courses may include references to the relevant databases for the suggested e-books as well suggested journals from RSU databases.
6. RSU and UL should review the contract on the transfer of students, anticipating the changes made in the UL programme.

On a long-term basis

7. A strategy that could lead to the research mobility of PhD students would be required.
8. The action plan to lower the high rates of student dropout in the last semesters of the doctoral program would be beneficial.
9. To implement regular meetings with the employers to ensure sufficient collaboration in improving study programmes, updating learning outcomes and developing new specialisations.
10. To involve students on a larger scale in the preparation of the applications of scientific research projects.
11. A long-term research strategy for tying the program "Psychology" to medical science demands is required, as is cooperating with the programs "Medicine" and "Pharmacy."
12. Analysis of drop-out and steps to be implemented to enhance the number of Psychology program graduates.
13. It is advisable to set higher quality criteria for doctorate thesis requirements and not to keep conference proceedings as an option in the requirements for successfully completing the four-year doctoral study program.

14. To strengthen the future research staff in the health science field at RSU, it is advisable to promote and attract to the doctoral study program "Health Care" those who have a biology education background.
15. More LCS experts could be involved in the sub-programme "Psychology".
16. If the external regulatory framework sets a limit to implement all three sub-programs within the framework of one study program, RSU should consider the possibility of implementing sub-programmes as specialisations.

In the event that the opinions of the experts regarding any of the requirements or criteria differ, please indicate the dissenting opinion.

Non