

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: EKA University of Applied Sciences

Study field: Arts

Experts:

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

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After carefully consulting provided documents and after conducting an on-site visit, experts found that the study field “Arts” (later Arts) and the three study programmes under the study field of Arts, comply with the basic provisions governing study fields and study programmes of higher education in the Republic of Latvia. Experts team would like for the EKA University of Applied Sciences (later EKA) to strive to achieve greatness and be a leader in the higher education area that ensures high quality in quality assurance and study process, not just meets basic regulatory requirements. Also such proactivity would only display transparency and efficiency of the internal EKA procedures. There are however a few areas of improvement.

The chain of decision making is typical for the institution of higher education of this profile and size and is commensurate with the academic goals and tasks of management of the university. The gathered evidence suggests that main managerial functions of the school are satisfactory. There’s a sufficient flow of information of curricular and task managerial type. The decision making process is clear and available for public scrutiny and for the most part, involves all relevant groups.

When it comes to quality management (QM), EKA has multiple procedures in place which is being briefly described in the provided materials (SAR page 8, Quality Management System Manual): “The head of the study direction, the director of the relevant programme, the vice-rector for studies and development, the quality manager, students, graduates and representatives of the industry are involved in ensuring the quality of study programmes. The main decisions, based on the analysis of the results, are accepted at the Study Council and administration meeting of the relevant study direction.” As evident, there are multiple instances involved in the control of quality of education at EKA, namely: vice-rector for studies and development, the quality manager, students (through surveys), and the Study Council (which has student and industry representatives).

In the case of Arts, however, the decision making and thus quality management is extremely streamlined as the same person is director of the study field and head of all 3 study programmes. This could be seen as a temporary circumstance and it is strongly advised for every head of study programme position to assign a unique person closely related to that study programme. Also, it would benefit the programmes by appointing key staff members (the ones who teach basic positions, principles, structure and methodology of the branch, in other words, hands-on practical courses) on longer than one semester employment contracts, thus ensuring a continuity of education. Experts also found a potential risk in Brand design study programme. Since EKA plans to take in students from various backgrounds and study programmes to this study programme, with current enrolment procedures they can not ensure that all students have sufficient background knowledge obtained in their previous education to start their studies at master level.

Another policy which would strengthen the Field, is deepening interdisciplinarity between the study programmes. (The example was brought up as a possibly fruitful interconnection between Game Design and Interior Design programmes).

The scope of research in EKA which is specifically related to the arts needs strengthening. There appears a lack of a clear strategy around notions of applied research and how to develop them further. It currently appears more aligned with the scientific side of the school, with outputs in economics, business featured heavily in something like the annual conference and its outputs. There is a vibrant culture of ‘research’ with the annual conference, financial support for participants who want to research and support or help for the more ‘traditional’ modes of output such as papers, conference submissions and journal articles. These are relevant and artists/designers participate in these modes of expression. But, there are numerous others ways to encourage staff to undertake and then output their research. These can be through exhibition, products, paintings and so on. Also the vibrancy of students engagement with industry is to be applauded and this can provide not just

modes of staff/student research but can also be monetised through KTP (Knowledge transfer partnerships) /KE (Knowledge Exchange). These all need to be encouraged more. This be done through strategic thinking for research 'clusters' aligning with the study programme curriculum, or staff interests, student or industry alignments. Clusters can be funded and supported but also participants working together can encourage their work and share networks, outputs. The annual conference should have specific attainable sections for clusters and arts/creative research.

EKA has established a system for determining and redistributing the financial support required for the implementation of the study field and the corresponding study programmes. There is also a system for financing scientific research and artistic creation. EKA has identified the infrastructure resources and material and technical support necessary for the implementation of the study field and study programmes. Resources are available to students and teaching staff, in case of new equipment or material purchase it is done through the Study field director. The same approach is for renewal of library materials - information resources. Library is available to students not only on site but remotely.

EKA is using different information and communication technology solutions to ensure training of staff, better study process quality. The needs of professional and didactic development of the teaching staff are purposefully determined, this was confirmed from both Management and teaching staff members during site visit. Academic staff also did not complain about the workload distribution, and everybody understands that professorial positions will be more focused on conducting research and lecturers will be more focused on carrying out the lectures. Support for students is available in different forms, one of the issues that experts found was that EKA has an agreement to provide psychological help for students, but none of students have used this opportunity, meanwhile students did not show awareness about this opportunity. Otherwise EKA has procedures for helping students and introducing them to the study process after enrolment into study programmes.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1.

Study field "Art" (sometimes written as "Arts") is one among five other study fields at EKA University of Applied Sciences (henceforth - EKA) which comprise exclusively of social sciences and humanities. One peculiarity of this study field is that under its umbrella there are 3 design study programmes and none directly connected to the core meaning of the name of the study field. Difficulty in streamlining the definition of the goals of the study field is that its constituent parts are so diverse: there is a professional bachelor, academic bachelor and academic master study programmes, some taught in Latvian, some in Latvian and English; these programmes have different study goals, different teaching methodologies and loads, different evaluation procedures etc. If a professional bachelor programme aims at the labour market, then academic master is oriented closer towards research and continuation of studies at the PhD level, or some other engagements and further away from immediate market needs. That said, the aims of the study field as defined in the self assessment report (henceforth - SAR), (SAR section 2.1.1. 10-13) are rather broad, yet satisfactory and on par with the similar programmes offered at the other institutions of higher education. The study programmes of the study field "Art" are also academically adept to address the challenges of the national economy.

In response to developmental trends of societies in the 21st century, EKA emphasises multicultural approach as part of its "1.1. Basic information on the higher education institution/ college and its strategic development fields": "EKA is developing as an interdisciplinary multicultural university"

(SAR section 1.1. p.4). It is a course of action worth welcoming, and it is strange that interdisciplinarity and multicultural approach is not being maintained at the study-field level: “The strategic aim of the study field “Art” is to provide students with quality education that is competitive in the Latvian and European labour markets [...]”

Some other aspects worth mention: emphasis on sustainable development, and life-long learning. In case of sustainable development there’s some evidence of the subject being of interest among some faculty members, and also 2 courses offered by Interior Design “Space Design” and “Ecology and Environment” touches on a subject of sustainability. Other study programmes in the study field “Art” don’t present any evidence of deeper curricular or structural grounding of the theme within their academic modules.

Regarding life-long development (SAR section p. 2.1.1. p.11). It is an important national and international strategy (EU, UNESCO thelifelonglearningblog.uil.unesco.org), however, it would be helpful to learn if there are any other concrete developments within the study field “Art” or at a wider level as part of its lifelong learning initiative. Specifically, the study field “Art” could be instrumental in providing life-long learning opportunities to older people, unemployed learners, and people with disabilities, or in supporting any other reskilling/upskilling, social equity and sustainable development strategies.

There’s a passive interconnection of the study programmes as there is a shared pool of teachers and also some elective courses are offered across the whole study field. On the other hand, due to a difference in type of the programmes: academic bachelor, professional bachelor and masters level, and difference in content, the interconnection between the programmes is satisfactory.

EKA provides satisfactory evidence of competitiveness analysis by comparing its own programmes as part of study field “Art” to 9 other programmes (7 international and 2 national). The conclusion which could be drawn from this analysis is that most (artistic) project driven studies in Europe are moving towards larger modules 20CP and similar which provides better flexibility, ensures interdisciplinarity and ability to experiment.

1.1.2.

To assess its inner strengths and weaknesses, EKA presented a detailed SWOT Analysis of the study field (SAR section 2.1.2. P. 14-16). In the analysis higher education institution (henceforth - HEI) lists the summary of its main shortfalls and the corrective steps, which are appropriate and logical. There are easy remedies such as increasing international exposure through more energetic engagement with Erasmus and a harder one: rising quality of “students' research and practical activity”. The last challenge poses a twofold difficulty, as U-Multirank (an European academic rating agency established on the initiative of the European Commission) rated EKA’s research poorly, even overall ranking of the university was second highest in Latvia, after Riga Technical University, and also raising students “practical activity” would require rewriting study programmes and allocating more CP’s to practical project development. EKA proposed solutions to the array of weaknesses, some issues however left not integrated in the further planning of the study field. For example, creating programme directors for every programme is not being addressed.

1.1.3.

The chain of decision making is typical for the HEI and is commensurate with the academic goals and tasks of management of the university. The provided material lists the main managerial functions of the school, from Senate to librarian, however, the executive relationship between the Study Council, and the Study Field is not entirely clear. Also, the election procedure or appointment of the Quality Manager (Pdf_1874_EN_v2_modified.pdf, pg 8) is not entirely clear as is this positions’ relationship with the Vice-Rector for Study and Development, the Study Council and the Head of the Study Direction. The chain of command between Vice-Rector, Head of the Study Direction and Director of Study Programme is quite clear, the role of Study Council and Quality Manager begs better explanation. In the “Development Plan of the Study Direction „Art” (Annex 3) there’s no description of the tasks of the Quality Manager. If the Quality Manager is outside study fields and

connected directly to the rectorate, what is his/her influence on the field.

Presence of the technical staff, especially in such technically involving fields as Computer Game Design and Interior design, in shaping the curriculum of the programmes and assisting with realisation of the practical projects needs a deeper involvement.

“GUIDELINES On the Provision of Internal Quality Assurance System” (EKA_Nolikums_kvalitates_nodrosinasana_2019.pdf) provides no functional description of Quality Manager. The task distribution between the programme director and head of the study field begs being addressed and needs a more rational solution than it is at the moment. Right now, all these positions are occupied by the same person.

1.1.4.

EKA has a growing number of applicants, who are being admitted through procedures which reflect on specifics of study programmes. Admissions follow through verification of compliance of the previous education, language test (in case of English implementation), and an interview. The admissions rules are subject to Senate’s approval and are made public. Thus admission procedures comply with the laws of the Republic of Latvia and statutes of EKA. Specifically for the Art Field, additional procedures are conducted to establish an artistic aptitude of the applicant. Respondent states (SAR section 2.1.4. p.19): “For later stages, students are admitted twice a year - in summer and winter.” Which is a flexible approach and has a thought-through integration into the study-flow mechanism. The recognition of the previously and elsewhere earned credit-points is transparent and logical: nominated by the programme director upon examination of Study Results Recognition Commission (SRRC). This examining body is however not being described in the material provided by EKA. SRRC is not listed in the Universities organigram 2_Annex_EKA_Structure.pdf neither in 4_Annex_Management_structure_study_direction.pdf

1.1.5.

Evaluation criteria and general provisions are clearly defined in 32_Nolikums_par_nosleguma_darbiem_grozijumi_apstiprinats_EN_2022.pdf which is publicly accessible at the Student’s Guide portal at <https://www.augstskola.lv/?parent=354&lng=eng> in line with the relevant Cabinet of Ministers’ Regulations.

The degree defence mechanisms are stated in point 3.4. (of the same document). The topicality, aim, object and subject, research methods, limitations, conclusions and proposals are meticulously described there. Furthermore, it provides clear guidelines of accepted scholastic and research methodology. The research parameters vary according to the type of the research paper. There are 5 types identified in the presented materials: Study paper, Project paper, Qualification paper, Bachelor paper and Master’s thesis. More practically oriented study programmes are allowed to include practical elements in their Project Paper. Study programme “Computer game design and graphics” stipulates Project Paper to consist of game description and game prototype.

The Bachelor's Paper of “Computer game design and graphics” programme however does not allow for any practical part. “4.10.9. In the Case study” (https://www.augstskola.lv/upload/32_Nolikums_par_nosleguma_darbiem_grozijumi_apstiprinats_EN_2022.pdf) developed game prototype is being analysed to provide answers to research questions.

It would strengthen practical engagement of the programme implementing a practical (prototype or playable slice of the game) part of the bachelor thesis.

It would be beneficial for the Computer game design and graphics programme to allocate within Bachelor’s Paper a special provision requiring a practical element in the form of game or graphic design prototype.

At a large, assessment methods and procedures are relevant to the subjects being assessed, however in order to achieve goals of the study programme, practical skill-set relevant to the focus are of the study programme needs better definition.

1.1.6.

Anti-plagiarism tools and procedures are in place. EKA's Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity is

openly available for students and employees – in the e-environment, “Student Guide” and “EKA Administration” EKA uses simple and clear anti - plagiarism procedures: Head of the Information Technologies Unit uploads the file in the anti - plagiarism system and sends the report to the Anti - plagiarism Control Committee within 3 working days. EKA is implementing an updated Anti - plagiarism control mechanism which would address a spectrum of AI posed threats.

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

EU-Multirank ranked EKA as second highest in Latvia. Management structure is satisfactory and typical for the institution of higher education and is commensurate with the academic goals and tasks of management of the university. Themes such as interdisciplinarity, life-long learning and sustainable development are being thematized in the presented materials, however only sustainable development has any curricular traction, specifically within Interior Design programme. Implementation of curricular interdisciplinarity (joint practical courses), as reiterated by the interviewed parties, would benefit Interior Design and Games Design programmes. Life-long learning needs a more visible presence within the field. The degree of defence mechanisms are clearly defined as well. EKA provides clear guidelines of accepted scholastic and research methodology and accepted research parameters. However, when it comes to research specifically in the study field Arts, there is a need for a clear definition of research themes and research methodology, also of strategies bringing teaching and research (applied, or practice based) closer together. Also EU-Multirank rated EKA’s research as an area which requires improvement. Another worth attention area is study programme-specific practical courses. As became evident during on-site interviews there’s a big demand of strengthening this curricular element by increasing its CP footprint and by bringing thematic subject and tools closer to current industry standards. Quality Assessment procedures are satisfactory, albeit Quality Manager’s exact task scope information flow and distribution of competences, especially in relationship with the Vice-Rector for Study and Development, the Study Council and the Head of the Study Field needs better definition. Also it would benefit the institution by allowing general staff to have a say in decision making. Another troubling point, worth immediate attention is an absence of the programme directors (study field director is also a director of every study programme of the study field Arts).

Strengths:

1. One of the highest institutional ratings in Latvia. U-Multirank ranked EKA as second highest in Latvia.
2. Admission procedures are satisfactory and comply with the laws of the Republic of Latvia, statutes of EKA and procedural standards in the field of Art.
3. Sustainable development is being thematised, especially within Interior Design programme.
4. Evaluation criteria and general provisions are clearly defined and publicly accessible at the Student’s Guide portal.
5. The degree defence mechanisms are clearly defined. The topicality, aim, object and subject, research methods, limitations, conclusions and proposals are described.
6. EKA provides clear guidelines of accepted scholastic and research methodology and accepted research parameters.
7. EKA's Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity is openly available for students and employees – in the e-environment, “Student Guide” and “EKA Administration”.
8. EKA uses simple and clear anti-plagiarism procedures.

Weaknesses:

1. Interdisciplinarity and multiculturality, declared at university level, are not present at the level of study field.

2. Life-long learning opportunities are present in the EKA, but they are not sufficiently advertised and communicated within the study field.
3. Interconnection between the study programmes within the field needs a cohesive strategy. Worth considering a stronger interdisciplinary engagement at the practical level (between Interior Design and Games design as proposed by students).
4. Research (applied or practice based) needs an established presence at a study field level. U-Multirank rated EKA's research poorly.
5. In order to raise students "practical activity" would require rewriting study programmes and allocating more CP's to practical project development.
6. Quality Manager positions' relationship with the Vice-Rector for Study and Development, the Study Council and the Head of the Study Field needs better definition.
7. Absence of programme directors (study field director is also a director of every study programme of the study field).

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1.

EKA has established a quality policy and it is publicly available in https://www.augstskola.lv/upload/Kvalit%C4%81tes_Politika_2_EN.pdf

There is also developed and maintained a quality assurance system, which contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes. The system mostly ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes. Experts acknowledge that EKA only recently has started transitioning from professionally oriented study programmes, to academic ones. During the site visit such an overall strategic aim was confirmed from EKA management side as well. The transition demands interference with curriculum to be more research and academic based rather than practically oriented and adjustment of teaching staff with more academic and research based background is also needed to ensure continuous development of study programmes, study field all together. After the site visit, experts still were not fully convinced that EKA is reaching its full potential to foster an academic environment more than a practical based study environment. This is also supported from employed teaching staff, most of them are field specialists not academics.

According to EKA priorities determined, action directions are defined in the following areas of activity: quality assurance; staff development; internationalisation; strategic partnership; image and reputation; resources (material and technical base and infrastructure).

One of the priorities of EKA is the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system.

According to information in SAR (SAR section 2.2.1. p. 22.) it is mentioned that EKA has established an internal quality system in accordance with the requirements of Part 1 of the "Standards and Guidelines of Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" standart (ESG). EKA quality system operates in accordance with the "EKA Quality Policy" approved by the EKA Senate meeting (Protocol No.168) on 16 February 2022. The quality system is designed to contribute to the achievement of EKA's vision, satisfy the wishes of students and stakeholders, and increase their satisfaction through regular improvements.

But, it is not fully clear how the quality policy is implemented in all EKA departments and what is the system. According to the site visit (meeting with the HEI management and QA representatives) - it was mentioned that there are regular meetings but the mechanism for control in all levels is not fully clear. From one side the quality system is described in the quality manual "EKA's Quality Management System Manual". The handbook defines the quality system model, improvement cycle,

document hierarchy, responsibilities, processes and their interactions, study quality assurance and system evaluation, in accordance with the quality management system self-assessment scheme established by EKA. From other side is not clear how it practically works and what is the mechanism for control, monitoring and implementation among all departments.

1.2.2.

The procedures has been developed and implemented for the development and review of the relevant study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms.

EKA engages its employees, students, employers and graduates in quality assurance and development through different governing bodies. External stakeholders participate in the evaluation of study processes in the Senate, Study Councils and evaluate study results by taking part in final examination commissions, practices and accreditation processes. EKA ensures collaboration with stakeholders in such activities as planning strategic goals, planning study results, planning study content, infrastructure development, staff provision and development, evaluation of achievements.

The heads of structural units ensure compliance with quality procedures and the achievement of results. EKA staff and external stakeholders are involved in updating and regularly improving study programmes and developing new study programmes. (SAR section 2.1.3. p.17).

Changes in the study field and programmes are made on the basis of annual self-assessment, visit results, evaluating the submitted proposals from teaching staff, students, graduates and employers, as well as taking into account changes in regulatory enactments. In order to find out the opinion and recommendations of students, graduates and industry representatives, surveys are regularly organised, which are determined by the survey procedure in the description of the EKA's Quality Management System. The surveys, based on the recommendations, identify areas for improvement of study programmes. As a result of the feedback, changes have been introduced in the organisation of the EKA study process, which means that the university takes the survey results into account and makes improvements in the system.

Regarding the feedback procedures, it is not clear how EKA is dealing with feedback. There are 3 entities which deal with surveys and other form of feedback in the institution:

Quality Manager who "organises annual surveys of personnel, students and employers, analyses and evaluates their results and provides a report to the Rector", the Programme Director who "analyses the results of the students' survey about the study process organisation and prepare recommendations for the Rector" and the Study Council which "develops recommendations for improving the programme of study, to approve course description and study plan, and to resolve conflicts between students and academic staff. Also, the Vice-Rector for Study and Development is part of the team dealing with study quality control. Programme Director reports directly to Rector about the feedback, there needs to be a more clear role assignments between all the above listed entities.

1.2.3.

In order to ensure compliance with ESG requirements and implement EKA's quality policy, EKA has developed a procedure for submitting complaints and proposals and it is included in the Study Regulations. The by-law is available on the EKA website, Student's Guide (https://www.augstskola.lv/upload/EKA_Nolikums_kvalitates_nodrosinasana_2019.pdf) as the procedure for submitting and reviewing applications. The procedure determines the procedure by which students may submit applications and the procedure and deadlines for their examination. The procedure is designed to have the opportunity to quickly obtain feedback from students in current situations, without waiting for another survey. However, the regulation does not provide for an anonymous procedure and system for submitting complaints and suggestions, as this may be important for various psychological and organisational reasons. For example, a student's fear of getting a lower grade if he complains or some delicate situations that student does not want to disclose publicly.

1.2.4.

The statistical data collection mechanism established by EKA is efficient, and analysing the SAR, the available attachments in the AIKA system and the published documents on the EKA's website it can be concluded that the mechanism ensures regular collection and analysis of information (statistics) on the study programmes corresponding to the study field. One of the principles established by EKA's quality policy is fact-based decision-making. In order to implement this principle and obtain facts about the study process and its results. According to SAR it can be concluded that in total, the main priority of EKA's development strategy, "Supply and content of higher education", identifies 35 measurable criteria that are regularly measured. The number of proposed measurable criteria can be recognised as significant, which determines the thoroughness of the quality analysis.

The results are analysed by conducting an analysis of the achievement of strategic goals and the implementation of action plans, as well as conducting an annual self-assessment. The results achieved by EKA are included in the EKA yearbook, input and stored in EKA's internal IT system Nexus. The results of the student and graduate surveys are published on the EKA website, Student Guide. The results of the surveys are being discussed at the administration meetings, the Study Council meetings and the Year-end meeting. (On-site visit) Regular reports of the study direction are published on the EKA website in the section Self-assessment reports of study directions. Information about graduates is accumulated by the director of the study field and involves them in the development of the programme based on acquired information.

The main procedures for the improvement cycle are described in the EKA's Quality System Manual. The evaluation of staff is carried out in accordance with the EKA staff performance assessment procedure. Quality Manager in EKA carries out the assessment of the QA system effectiveness and provides feedback about the system. This officer also organises annual surveys of personnel, students and employers, analyses and evaluates their results and provides a report to the Rector.

The results are analysed by conducting an analysis of the achievement of strategic goals and the implementation of action plans, as well as conducting an annual self-assessment. The mechanism for obtaining and providing feedback, including from students, graduates and employers, is effective and focused on the improvement of the study field.

1.2.5.

Information about the study field and the corresponding study programmes, their content, expectations in study results are available on the university's website for all three study programmes - Interior Design, Computer games design and graphics, Brand design in Latvian, for "Brand design" in English.

The person responsible for placing information on the website is the Communication Project Manager, on the VIIS platform - the education methodologist, on the E-platform - the vice-rector for studies and development. General information about study programme type, length, study courses etc. corresponds to the information available in the official registers. Website information can be adjusted with implementation languages of the specific study programmes because currently there is no distinction if the programme is held in Latvian or English language.

It is not clear why Russian language is offered on the EKA homepage at all. According to on-site visit (meeting with the HEI management and the person responsible for the QA system) it was explained that information for Russian is more targeted to international student's parents from central Asia countries. Experts panel would suggest to put description of the study information in the languages of the interest countries or choose other alternatives such as describe information only in English and Latvian, since study programmes are implemented only in these both languages.

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

Internal quality assurance system is made according to standards and laws, but is not clear what is the mechanism of control, monitoring and implementation of the quality system, prioritising employee involvement, understanding and fulfilment of quality standards.

EKA engages its employees, students, employers and graduates in quality assurance and development through collegiate governing bodies and feedback from students, employees, and involved partners is taken into account in the organisation of the EKA study process. There is the mechanism developed for submission of student complaints and suggestions with the opportunity to give opinion and receive feedback, but the regulation does not provide for an anonymous procedure and system for submitting complaints and suggestions. The statistical data collection mechanism established by EKA is efficient and the mechanism ensures regular collection and analysis of information (statistics) on the study programmes corresponding to the study field. The number of proposed measurable criteria is significant, which determines the thoroughness of the quality analysis. Information about the direction of study and the corresponding study programmes, their content, expectations in study results are available on the university's website for all three study programmes but all are not in English.

Strengths:

- 1) One of the priorities of EKA is the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system.
- 2) Feedback from students, employees, and involved partners is taken into account in the organisation of the EKA study process.
- 3) The number of proposed measurable criteria (35) is significant, which determines the thoroughness of the quality analysis.
- 4) The information on the website is very transparent and for students easy to use.

Weaknesses:

- 1) It is not fully clear how the quality policy is implemented in all EKA departments and what is the system because it is not stated in documents.
- 2) There is the mechanism developed for submission of student complaints and suggestions with the opportunity to give opinion and receive feedback but the mechanism developed for submission of student complaints and suggestions does not provide for an anonymous procedure and system for submitting complaints and suggestions.
- 3) On the EKA web page there can not be found staff performance assessment procedure summary/reviews.
- 4) The homepage offers Russian language, which is a politically sensitive issue and there are other alternatives to reach the target audience.

Assessment of the requirement [1]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

EKA partly ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system and some improvements are necessary.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

EKA has established a quality policy and it is publicly available, however, it is not fully clear how the quality policy is implemented in all EKA departments and what is the system because it is not stated in documents.

- 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

There are internal regulations that are stipulating new study programme creation, internal approval and periodical evaluation.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality have been developed, during the site interviews staff members provided examples of life long education courses or didactic courses to improve their skills. Currently these courses are not enough for academical programmes purposes, but EKA is only beginning the transition to academic programme implementation. Since EKA is transitioning from Professional study programme education to academic programme, they need to attract and blend in more staff members that are elected in full time positions and hold PhD that are relevant to the study field and study programmes.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The mechanism developed for submission of student complaints and suggestions does not provide for an anonymous procedure and system for submitting complaints and suggestions. But it is possible to give feedback about study process but not anonymous.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Transition from professional to academic bachelor could be seen as a quest for "continuous improvement" of the study field. Study field has a wide and well established framework of adjacent, elective or supporting disciplines, however the core areas of the programmes need a stronger academic stand.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1.

Based on the SAR section 2.3.1. p.29, it can be concluded that the budget of EKA consists of two main sources of funding: tuition fees and external funding, in particular project funding. External funding includes EU structural funds and international projects, which account for 29% of the budget. These funds are used to cover the costs of academic, scientific and administrative processes throughout the university, reflecting a sense of solidarity between study programmes.

The breakdown of costs between the different categories is determined in accordance with the approved budget. Each study field currently generates sufficient revenue and external funding to guarantee its implementation and profitability.

For the study fields and programmes, funding is derived from tuition fees and external funding (project funding). It is noteworthy that the study field "arts" has a 39% share of external funding in the budget for the 2022/2023 academic year, which is attributable to the launch of the ESF project "Automation tools for creative industries AutoRade". This project is identified as contract No 8.2.3.0/22/A/004 and falls under Specific Support Objective 14.1.1 "Recovery measures in the education sector (ESF)" and Measure 14.1.1.1 "Digitisation initiatives to improve the quality of studies". During the site visit experts also saw some of the equipment bought through these projects.

For scientific and creative activities, financial support includes the higher education institution's own resources as well as external funding, including project funding. This support represents 13.26% of the total budget of the study field. These financial resources have a dual purpose: to support staff and students in their research and creative activities and to promote the implementation of projects. Additionally, during the interviews with staff members and management experts found out that motivation system for rewarding scientific research and artistic creation are set in place, EKA even have their own internal regulations on how to determine the reward amount.

1.3.2.

Analysing the information provided by the University in the report (SAR section 2.3.2. p. 30), the following conclusions can be made about the infrastructure and material and technical support for the implementation of the study field: The University has a well-equipped infrastructure for the implementation of the field of study and the relevant study programmes. This includes both specialised rooms and common areas that are available for students and for lecturers, confirmed during the interviews.

EKA has a specialised facilities, for example:

Digital Laboratory (DIGLab): Equipped with facilities for creating and testing computer games. This room contains computers, software (including the Adobe package), various smart devices, VR and AR glasses.

Digital Design Lab: This room has computers, software (including Adobe package), interactive projector and 3D printer.

Photo and video content creation lab: specialised room.

Drawing room: A specialised room equipped as a computer room for design planning, with specialised software for sketching and drawing. This room has tablets and large-format materials to facilitate practical and collaborative work.

Workshop: A room for practical work, including an exhibition area.

EKA also has a common areas, such as:

Lecture rooms: Eighteen classrooms are available, equipped with the necessary materials and technical equipment, including computers and projectors, to facilitate effective teaching.

Black Room: Probably a room with a special function not described in detail in the text.(for videos)

Business Incubator Room: Designed to support entrepreneurial activities.

Relaxation corners: places for students to relax.

Conference room: suitable for conferences and meetings. Used for lectures as well

Library and creative room: space for academic resources and creative activities.

Administrative space: for administrative tasks.

Student Council rooms: for student council activities.

EKA also has a space for Café: SAR did not describe this aspect in detail, however, during the one site visit, EKA indicated that it is planned to open the cafe in the near future

EKA also has a digital resources and e-environment:

Wi-Fi: Wi-Fi connection is available throughout the campus.

Lecture rooms: All lecture rooms are equipped with physical facilities including computers and projectors.

E-environment: The learning process is supported by an e-environment which includes the EKA website, EKA app (available on AppStore and Play Market), Moodle and BigBlue Button.

EKA website: The EKA website contains organisational information, timetables, announcements, a book catalogue and much more.

Eka App: Students can quickly access class lists, announcements and study/financial data. Unfortunately during the interviews with the students none of the parties indicated that they are actively using the EKA app, so experts would suggest either to close it, to preserve finances or update it so students actually would engage in its usage.

E-Nexus: Database used to record student information including personal details, study plans, achievements and orders.

To sum up, EKA provides comprehensive infrastructure and technical support, including dedicated facilities, shared spaces, digital resources and e-environments, to ensure the effective delivery of the study field and relevant study programmes. These facilities shall be accessible to the institution and its staff as well as to the students.

If students or staff members want to suggest buying something new for the study course implementation or university premises they can write their inquiry to the study programme director. Director is responsible to evaluate the importance of the request, decide with the Rector about the purchase and allocate financial resources in case the request is satisfied.

1.3.3.

The analysis of the report of the university shows (SAR section 2.3.3. p.31.) that EKA has developed a systematic approach to develop and acquire methodological and informational resources to support the educational process. Library resources and databases that are available to students and staff members. In addition, students are informed about the use of the National Library of Latvia remotely. Library opening hours are determined on the basis of student attendance and demand, which is assessed through surveys and individual requests. The library offers an electronic catalogue, which includes books available not only in the EKA library but also in other libraries. The library's collection is regularly updated as follows:

The librarian keeps track of new publications and informs the programme director.

The Programme Director, in consultation with the teaching staff, assesses the need to acquire new titles for the courses concerned.

The content of the courses and the relevance of the bibliographical sources are constantly reviewed by the teaching staff. If newer sources are needed that are not available in the library, the teaching staff shall inform the librarian.

The librarian assesses the cost and feasibility of purchasing the required books. If feasible, the book is purchased, otherwise, alternatives such as similar titles or used copies are considered. Funding for replenishment is allocated from the EKA annual budget, usually around 2-3% per year, based on the depreciation of books and faculty demand for newer literature. It is important to mention that EKA stated that the Library shall only add to its collection the latest literature not older than 5 years.

Students can borrow books through a subscription model and use information sources in the library reading room. New fully equipped computer classes for carrying out study works are available to students as well.

Library also offers other services, including help with sourcing, photocopying, printing, scanning and binding. Several databases like EBSCO, SCOPUS are available to students and staff. Subscriptions to

databases are recommended by the faculty and depend on the availability of financial resources. In EKA SAR it was indicated that during period from 2021 till 2022 there were 15819 searches in databases. (SAR section 2.3.3.p. 32.). Available databases to the students and staff members are sufficient to find latest trends, research activities and ensure research process in the EKA. In summary, EKA has a well-structured approach for improving methodological and information support, including library resources and databases. Students have access to resources and services, both physically and through the e-environment, to effectively support their studies.

1.3.4.

SAR section 2.3.4. P. 33-34. states that EKA uses various information and communication technology (ICT) solutions to ensure an adequate and efficient study process. These solutions are particularly important for modern study process and can additionally ensure a fully remote study process if needed. An interactive digital "Student Guide" has been developed to familiarise students with the study process and internal rules. This guide includes internal rules, sample forms, e-environment instructions, infographics, etc. The Guide is available on the Eka website in both English and Latvian. (<https://www.augstskola.lv/?parent=354&lng=eng>)

An analysis of the "Student Guide" available on the website shows that students are offered a comprehensive and well-structured information, including information on studies and opportunities, the e-environment, the library and other issues of interest to students.

EKA has set up an integrated e-environment which combines the student database, the Eka website, Moodle and the video lecture system. The e-environment is widely used by teaching staff for academic and methodological work. Course materials, course descriptions, requirements, guidelines for independent work and other necessary information are posted on the Moodle e-environment. There are also samples of coursework topics, practice assignments, bachelor thesis topics and more. Moodle serves as a platform for course materials, independent work assignments and various information resources. It is used to facilitate communication and provide students with resources.

Big Blue Button is used for online video lectures, seminars and workshops. It offers features such as 'breakout rooms' for group work, discussion, display of visuals (including web content) and collaboration via the built-in whiteboard. A "Survey" function allows online checking and evaluation of student responses. Overall Teaching staff use a variety of digital tools that include both face-to-face and in some cases where EKA have allowed hybrid learning meaning that some lectures especially for the guest lecturers are held online. These tools, such as Mural, Miro, Trello, Kahoot, ITPoker, Menti, etc., allow the use of design thinking and problem-solving techniques. Specialised software such as Archicad, Adobe Creative Suite, AutoCAD, Autodesk Building Design Suite Ultimate and others are available to students and faculty according to the needs of each study programme. A dedicated Moodle site called "Eka Administration" has been set up to disseminate news, scientific and methodological activities, internal rules, seminar materials, information on scientific conferences, etc. to teaching staff. Students during the site interviews also confirmed that because EKA had a good setup for e-environment when pandemic started they very fastly and smoothly could transfer study process remotely.

1.3.5.

According to the information provided by EKA (SAR section 2.3.5.34-35), the University has clearly defined, implemented and communicated procedures for attracting qualified teaching staff to the study field and relevant study programmes. These procedures shall be open and involve stakeholders. EKA employs both elected and visiting lecturers. A call for applications is launched to attract lecturers for the various positions: Selected teaching posts: advertisements for these posts are published in the official publication "Latvijas Vēstnesis". The information on the portal "Latvijas vēstnesis" shows that the university regularly announces competitions for the positions (<https://www.vestnesis.lv/rezultati/atbilstiba/on/locijums/on/lapa/1/skaitis/20/kartot/datums/teksts/ekonomikas+and+kulturas+augstskola/>). Advertisements for guest lecturers are published in other media. The procedure for the election of academic posts is in accordance with the requirements of

the laws and regulations and complies with the 'Regulations on the election to academic posts'. These regulations are available on Moodle in the "Eka Administration" section. It sets out the specific procedures and detailed criteria for these elections. Regardless of the status of the faculty member in the institution, all candidates are evaluated on the basis of the following criteria: Educational qualifications; teaching experience; professional experience; achievements in research and/or creative work; communication skills. (SAR section 2.3.6. p.35-36) In general, the HEI follows clear procedures for recruiting qualified teaching staff, ensuring transparency and fairness. The process includes open competitions, detailed evaluation criteria and an induction process that familiarises new lecturers with the institution's operations, security protocols and available support. This information is effectively communicated to potential candidates and stakeholders. Nevertheless experts found out that not in all cases teaching staff is closely related to the study programmes, for example there are some architects, glass maker, entrepreneurs that are teaching not related study courses. Selection of staff members can be improved and will be discussed in more detail under each study programme.

1.3.6.

Based on the information provided by EKA (SAR section 2.3.6. p.35), it can be concluded that the University demonstrates a targeted approach to meet the professional and didactic development needs of its teaching staff. It uses appropriate development measures and evaluates the effectiveness of these measures. The EKA regularly organises various activities to improve the qualifications of its teaching staff. For example: Research seminars aimed at involving staff in research and supporting the preparation of publications for internationally cited databases. Methodological workshops aimed at improving methodological skills and course development. Methodological conferences discussing digital technology tools, academic integrity, ethics and gamification in the study process. Participation in international scientific conferences: in Latvia and abroad, using research results in teaching. On the other hand while system to improve professional skills of staff are set in place and working, EKA needs to improve and focus more on the attraction and involvement of Academic staff members that are PhD holders into the respective study field. Currently large proportion of staff members are either on short term contracts or representatives of the industry and the academic side is not as strong as it could be.

During the reporting period, the teaching staff has actively participated in these activities, they also named these examples during the interviews. Several examples of their activities and their results are:

ECA Research Seminars: Introduction to Research Methodology and Publication Preparation.

Collaboration with other institutions to modify course descriptions and outcomes. Improvements were observed in the structure of the courses and in the quality of the papers.

Digital learning tools: Workshops on e-course development using Moodle and various digital tools. Participation in conferences allowed the use of research results in teaching. The EKA uses a performance appraisal system to assess the quality of the teaching staff. The evaluation takes into account various factors, including: Student surveys twice a year; quality of e-learning courses; visits of scientific or creative events. Teaching staff are informed of the results of the evaluation, including the results of the student survey and the quality control of the e-courses.

Study field director and staff members explained that if any shortcomings are identified regarding teaching activities, these are discussed individually with each lecturer. These discussions are chaired by the programme director, highlighting the measures to be taken to remedy the deficiencies. The University systematically promotes the professional and didactic development of its teaching staff. It does so through a variety of measures and evaluations, aligned with the institution's priorities and effectively addressing teaching needs. This approach ensures continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and is consistent with a transparent evaluation process.

1.3.7.

Based on the SAR section 2.3.7. p. 37 and site interviews with management and staff members

composition and qualifications of teaching staff: 41 teaching staff are involved in the implementation of the field of study. It consists of: 21 (51 %) core teachers; 20 (49 %) guest lecturers; 15 PhDs (12 elected at EKA); 21 teaching staff with a Master's degree (10 elected at EKA); 4 professors (3 EKA professors); 4 Associate Professors (3 at EKA); 10% are foreign faculty members. Professionals in the field involved in specific study programmes are bringing industry trends into the study process. The distribution of workload is designed to ensure a balance between teaching, methodological and research/creative activities. Teaching (50-60 %) This component includes teaching, supervising studies, supervising project work/theses and related tasks. Methodological work (10-20 %) this includes maintaining courses, attending e-courses, participating in methodological events and updating content. Research and creative work (20-40 %) This aspect includes participation in research, projects, participation in conferences and creative activities. Additionally experts found threat to the study field from the administrative point of view, currently study field director fill in several roles such as - study field director, 3 study programme director, lecturer. Such workload can not be described as balanced and to minimise threat of interrupting normal succession in case of resignation, experts team urge to split responsibility from one person to several. For example assign for each study programme separate study programme director. In case of other administrative staff members workload can be considered as balanced and does not pose threat to the study field continuity and development.

Given the involvement of industry professionals in the programme, the research workload is relatively low due to the specialised nature of the study field. Professionals contribute mainly to practical training in professional courses.

Adjustments have been made to the composition of the teaching staff during the period under review, including the recruitment of additional staff with both an arts background and a doctorate. These changes were influenced by the move to online studies in the context of Covid-19 and the licensing of new degree programmes.

Some faculty members participate in the programme on a part-time basis, contributing their expertise in specific aspects of the curriculum.

The University ensures a balanced workload for teaching staff, which includes academic, research and administrative responsibilities. The University demonstrates a comprehensive approach to maintaining a balanced workload for teaching staff. By dividing responsibilities between pedagogical, methodological and research/creative areas, while taking into account professionals in the field, the institution ensures an efficient and comprehensive academic environment. Adaptations in response to external factors further demonstrate the institution's adaptability and commitment to quality education.

1.3.8.

According to SAR section 2.3.8. P. 38. EKA has effectively identified and established a comprehensive support system to meet the diverse needs of its students. This system is designed for different categories of students, including international students, part-time students, distance learning students and students with special needs. EKA offers comprehensive information support to students regardless of their mode of study. The student handbook available on the EKA website provides structured information on the different stages of your studies. It includes infographics covering academic and financial activities, as well as the steps involved in studying and preparing the final thesis. Internal regulatory and methodological documents are also available, as well as e-learning guidelines. Also to introduce students to study process at EKA mentoring programme run by the Student Council ensures a smooth orientation of new students. Posting of course materials and learning requirements on the e-environment. Links to freely accessible bibliographic sources to facilitate course-related research. Face-to-face and electronic consultancy for course studies and project development. EKA offers substantial career support from guest lectures that are industry professionals, addressing industry-specific problems, interaction with EKA alumni, sharing career experiences and insights, study tours to companies and organisations, which give an opportunity to

experience real life, participation in professional competitions that foster innovation and creativity. The institution offers various financial support opportunities, including: Scholarships for eligible students (Latvian and Kazakh students). Flexible payment schedules to accommodate financial needs. Tuition fee reductions for outstanding achievements in secondary school (for Latvian students). Tuition fee discounts for active participation in the Student Council. Tuition fee discounts for participation in professional competitions and research activities. (SAR section 2.3.8. P. 38.) Specialised support is provided for international students - Latvian language and cultural training to help integration. Also the rector mentioned that students can seek psychological support but currently no one has used this opportunity. On the other hand, students during the interviews did not confirm that they are aware of such opportunities. Experts conclude that such opportunities should be advertised more in study field programmes.

In summary, EKA demonstrates a strong and inclusive support system that meets the different needs of students. This comprehensive approach ensures that students, regardless of their background or form of study, receive the guidance, resources and assistance they need to succeed in their academic journey and beyond.

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

EKA has developed a comprehensive and well-structured approach to various aspects of its operations, including financial support, infrastructure, academic staff qualifications, student support systems, and teaching quality. The institution's commitment to ensuring the quality of education is evident through its rigorous measures for attracting teaching staff, promoting professional development. The support system is set in place and addresses the diverse needs of students, encompassing information, methodological, career, financial, and technical aspects. Additionally, the institution's adaptation to changes, such as online learning and recruitment of industry professionals, reflects its agility in responding to evolving circumstances. Overall, the higher education institution demonstrates a strong dedication to delivering high-quality education and fostering a conducive learning environment.

Strengths:

- 1) Professional Development: The provision of various training opportunities for teaching staff reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation.
- 2) Student Support System: The institution's robust support system caters to a wide range of student needs.
- 3) The institution's flexibility in responding to changes, such as online learning and new study programmes, showcases its adaptability and foresight.
- 4) Transparency in procedures, regulations, and support services is evident through accessible resources and information available on the EKA website.
- 5) The institution's comprehensive recruitment procedures ensure the presence of diverse teaching staff, including industry professionals.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Opportunities for engagement with industries and organisations could be further highlighted to enhance practical exposure for students.
- 2) Students were unaware about psychological help opportunities.
- 3) There is not transparent enough metrics to determine effectiveness of teaching quality, research outcomes and support systems.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1.

The directions of scientific/ applied etc. research are outlined in the documents ZRDAS 2023 & EKA's development strategy available at EKA's website https://www.augstskola.lv/upload/ZRDAS2023_apstiprinats_ENG.pdf. In the SAR it mentions 5 priorities yet in priority directions 21-23 there are nine approaches. The one chosen that is perceived as closely aligned to arts from the nine-'strategies' outlined is 'creative industries and design'. This would appear to be a suitable and appropriate direction for EKA because it appears to be clearly orientated towards the model of attempting to engage both students and staff in developing their practice as research, particularly in relation to industry projects, competitions, 'live' work and so on which are clearly a strength of the arts-based activities and outputs of the institution. However, in expert attempt to drill down further into what this strategy or objective might actually mean for the three study areas in Arts experts cannot find a coherent articulation of how this is being analysed or applied within the programmes. The only evidence experts can see is in the numerous student competitions and activities and 'achievements'. This looks good and is healthy but does not relay a clear and articulate strategy to what the creative industries and design research might entail. No staff activities are outlined in SAR section 2.4.1 p. 39-40 which suggests that the staff see their activities possibly primarily through the students' achievements. In ZRDAS2023 there is a strengths/weaknesses analysis of research at page 8 which is revealing and an honest response to the difficulties faced in motivating and incentivizing research, as well as embedding it into curricula and the participants' processes. Instruments which mechanically record output (such as SCOPUS/WoS) are not necessarily useful for Art's based practice and therefore might not be appropriate in order to gauge or incentivise perhaps what might be a more 'organic' growth of staff and students research. Seems there's no cohesive and relevant to artistic (or design) practice research methodology. EKA bundles Arts with humanities and sweeps under the rug of "social sciences, commercial sciences" aka "Economics, Business management, administration and real estate management" ZRDAS2023 page 4. Even though ZRDAS2023 prioritises research and creative activity, it is only research which is being duly addressed with no clear incentives to engage in creative activity.

1.4.2.

The connections between the practices of the staff to the study processes they are involved in or teach within seem to be the driving factors for the logics of what research might be in each of the arts areas. The justifications for these are not made explicit in the SAR section 2.4.2 p. 40-41. For instance rather than a list of some of the exhibitions or projects that staff have undertaken it would have been more coherent to demonstrate how either the practice of the projects are or have been embedded in the learning journeys, projects or curricula of the study areas. There is a clear link between staff and students projects related to research, the research needs to be clarified. Staff are undoubtedly talented and have many skills and practices yet this section of the report does not make clear how research, what it is perceived as, how it is used and then embedded into the study field processes, can be defined. In SAR, section 2.4.2. pages 40-41 lists some forms of creative activity of the staff, namely describing an exhibiting track record of 3 teachers and research activities of additional 2 persons in adjacent fields of philosophy and ethics and culture and sociology, however there's no mention of how "artistic creation and the outcomes thereof are integrated in the study process in the study programmes of all levels".

1.4.3.

This section of the SAR demonstrates confidence and clarity in how EKA is engaging with international cooperation. The Internationalisation and Modernisation Strategy (IMS) 2023 is also a good report into the areas where EKA are strong and weak. Connections in Erasmus and numerous institutions across Europe are being purposefully developed as are possibilities in the USA via games design. Masters level collaboration appears less developed at this time but with some initial developments in progress as set out by the IMS2023. The IMS suggests some weaknesses with no

inter-institutional agreements for study programme “Digital game design and graphics” as of yet. These agreements can take considerable time and usually become meaningful when organic relations become solidified and mutually beneficial. It would appear that many of these early discussions are happening and therefore being purposefully developed. EKA lists a robust international cooperation spanning across countries and continents and drawing not only from Erasmus+ but also other international opportunities.

1.4.4.

EKA has clearly developed mechanisms for the involvement of staff to engage with research. As ZRDAS2023 clearly prioritises. The ambitions of the institution for research activities to be supported and undertaken is clear. For instance mechanisms such as financial support for exhibitions and research activities and the 6-year annual scientific conference are established instruments of research support and their ambitions are clearly outlined. The oversight of the EKA journal not being included in SCOPUS is an oversight. (development strategy report). Exploring the research strategy paper and looking at the contents of the April 2023 annual conference experts were struck by how the fields of study in Arts were under-represented in the contents of the conference, with little or no specific direct relations between the subject areas and research presentations/themes. Therefore, whilst the ambitions and aims of research and the mechanisms for involving staff are in existence, the mechanisms for research appear to still be embryonic in how well they might be considered to be functioning and efficient. For instance in the weaknesses of the development strategy report for research there are issues with definition of areas and then with cooperation between staff. The lack of numerous arts-based presentations in the annual conference does not suggest staff are engaging fully with the directions of the aims. Additionally Art is not listed among EKA research directions in 2018 - 2021 (annex. EKA_Strategy_2023_ENG. p.29). For comparison, “Management, administration and real estate management” is listed 6 times. Also, 5.2. “DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR SCIENTIFIC AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES 2019-2023 YEAR” doesn’t list any single artistic activity. Page 38.

1.4.5.

The Annual Report on the Scientific Activity of the EKA University of Applied Sciences, 2021/2022 states that Numerous students submitted articles, descriptions and abstracts of work as well as undertaking exhibitions, attending conferences and so on. The reflective report also demonstrates a clear confidence in the number and variety of students participating in shows, projects, live work and so on. There are clear mechanisms of promotion of the students in various aspects of what is being called research and how it is being supported, mainly financially and then undoubtedly through how staff support this work. By the number of projects and work submitted it would appear to be functioning efficiently and in a manner which is beneficial to both staff and students. This is at all levels. The final row of work relates to Knowledge Exchange (KE) or Knowledge transfer partnerships (KTP) and these are not distinctly referred to in the reflective statement. These approaches can monetise research through a more direct connection to practices and projects, for example students as research and development with live projects etc. Which also aligns with the next strategic goals of EKA, as mentioned during the interviews with Study programme director and rector. It would be useful to reflect more on these types of projects as they might show a potential way of making the research and ‘creation’ component of EKA stronger. In general the report presents a steadily growing student activity among what is described as research, conferences with creative works, etc. These activities demonstrate the potential to become a great base of applied research.

1.4.6.

Most of the innovations appear to be based around various learning technologies and/or storage processes such as MOODLE or the database of NEXUS. Undoubtedly these are useful and aid processes of distribution and storing information. There is no evidence provided of how they have improved or impacted upon the study processes directly. For instance, how can or has moodle/PANOPTO, all of these tools used to flip learning, impact on access of lectures for instance,

enhance how research and learning can be embedded back into work through teaching, asynchronous deliveries, seminar-based learning after watching films of lectures and so on. In research the way in which learning technologies can be utilised could be evidenced much more here. It would also be worth remarking that innovation in how research can be applied to the field is not just through learning technologies. EKA has shown how it is perhaps attempting to embed a practice-led approach to research through student projects, exhibitions, and staff bringing their practice into the learning, it would be good to have seen some of these ideas explored more in this section on 'innovations'. Digitalization as part of streamlining day-to day management of the school does not immediately count as a meaningful and necessarily positive impact on the study process. More fruitful is an example of "Interior Design" lecturers actively working in the industry, thus giving students the opportunity to work in workshops that are equipped according to a certain field. Also, "Distance learning organization" (SAR section 2.4.6. p. 46) should not come at the expense of presential teaching/learning. Seems like respondent is committed to efficiency and cost-savings and is inclined to see engagement with technologies in education as primarily a matter of cost-saving and efficiency.

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

There are clearly mechanisms and instruments in place which support research by staff and students in EKA. The ambition is one of financial support and assistance (although time allocation for research is not made clear). There is clearly a vibrant culture of student competitions, projects, live work and linking practice work amongst staff to curricula. There is what appears to be a healthy and growing energy around the development of inter-institutional links and exchanges. The analysis and then dissemination of the key strategy for the direction of research in 'creative industries and design' is not yet articulated and then expressed in a coherent way through the work of the staff and students. It might be too broad a strategy, what does it really mean for the study programmes and field. This feels like it is not assisting or incentivising the evolution of research amongst the staff yet the notion that practice is embedded into teaching seems to offer a way forward. This needs to be articulated and made clear. Innovation is happening but the reflective report suggests it is through learning technologies only. Experts think this is not quite right and notions of KTP/KE should be explored for innovation in research in these areas. On the other side EKA presents no earnest attempt to furbish itself up with a research which is somewhat relevant to its "Art" field. Which leaves the expert panel with focusing more on "creative activities" which are not abundant, yet evident from the materials provided. Especially when it comes to student creative activities.

Strengths:

- 1) Practice-led approach to research
- 2) Vibrant student culture of exhibitions, projects and practice-led work
- 3) Burgeoning erasmus connections and inter-institutional exchanges in development

Weaknesses:

- 1) Coherent dissemination and implementation of key research strategy
- 2) Lack of KTP/KE articulation which might serve as a key activity for EKA.
- 3) There is a lack of strategic thinking for research clusters aligned with the study programme curriculum.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Currently EKA is at the verge of transitioning to a more academic study profile in study field Art, compared to previous professionally oriented study programmes. The scientific evidence for academic research currently can be evaluated as poor and not always coherent with the study programmes in the study field. Artistic research is more sophisticated and established. They both need to be developed in tandem with each other.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1.

EKA collaborates with several institutions: companies, state and non-state organisations, professional associations, universities, colleges, secondary schools, etc. In detailed information in the self-assessment reports of study directions can be seen that there is a collaboration with international Universities but there could also be stronger cooperation in different projects with the Universities from Latvia too. Experts concluded that collaboration is planned and organised depending on the type of institutions, as well as geographical location. The main criteria for starting collaboration are: reputation of the partner and benefit to all collaboration partners. The criteria for determining the reputation of cooperation partners are not defined. In the SAR section 2.5.1.p. 47-48. is mentioned that partners are found by participating in different events (conferences, forums, projects etc.) and working in associations. Many partners are organisations, where EKA graduates are employed but it could not be the main criteria;

The main directions of collaboration are as follows:

Participation in scientific research and creative activities;

Participation in the improvement of study directions and study programmes;

Provision of places of practice (see list of concluded contracts available in annex);

Organisation of methodological events;

Organization of guest lectures and creative workshops;

Organization of student competitions and olympiads;

Participation in state final examinations, incl. revision of works.

The chosen directions of collaboration allow to ensure both the achievement of the strategic goals set out in the EKA development strategy, as well as the goals of the study direction. While the analysis acknowledges international university collaborations and EKA has provided a large list of collaboration partners, it suggests that stronger cooperation with universities within Latvia could enhance the institution's local network and potential for joint projects. This could lead to more diverse opportunities for students and faculty to engage in collaborative initiatives. The criteria for determining the reputation of collaboration partners are not explicitly defined in the SAR. Adding more clarity and transparency to this criterion could help in ensuring that collaboration is established with partners who align well with the institution's goals and values. While participation in events and alumni connections are valid ways to find partners, the experts suggest considering additional methods for partner selection. For example exploring partnerships through formal proposals, joint grant applications, or targeted outreach could expand the pool of potential collaborators. The SAR section 2.5.2. p.50 mentions that many partners are organisations where EKA graduates are employed. While this can be a valuable connection, it's important to ensure that collaboration decisions prioritise the educational benefits and opportunities for current students, rather than solely focusing on alumni connections. To further evaluate the effectiveness of collaboration efforts, the institution could consider implementing mechanisms to measure the impact of collaborations on student learning outcomes, research achievements, and overall institutional objectives. This could provide valuable insights into which collaborations are most

successful and impactful. Experts panel conclude that the chosen directions of collaboration align with the institution's strategic goals. It could be beneficial to explicitly detail how each collaboration direction contributes to these goals, demonstrating a clear connection between collaboration efforts and institutional growth.

1.5.2.

EKA cooperates with the institutions from abroad but more with higher education institutions, for example, Università di Urbino Carlo Bo, Urbino, Italy, Valencian International University, Valencia, Spain, Nursing School of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal, “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati, Galati, Romania, Abdullah Gül University, Kayseri, Turkey, Aalen University of Applied Sciences, Germany, Powiskaski Kwidzyn, Poland, Paris Business School, France. (SAR section 2.5.2. p.50)

There is no stated international cooperation with employers, employers’ organisations, municipalities, non-governmental organisations, etc. within the framework of the study field. And as was mentioned in the on-site visit (meeting with the director of the study field and all study programmes), study programmes have international strategic plans. Then it means that the international partner list must be improved. It seems that mostly cooperation in the study field is carried through Erasmus+ programme which is also mentioned by SAR: “The main opportunities for attracting foreign collaboration partners are provided by the Erasmus+ programme. Currently, the procedure for the selection of lecturers and administrative personnel for mobility has been updated.”

There is no assurance that the international cooperation is sufficient and that such cooperation contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes. Diversifying cooperation partners can provide a wider range of knowledge, perspectives and opportunities for students and staff. EKA has identified that Erasmus+ provides key opportunities to attract international cooperation partners. To reinforce this point, experts would advise for the next accreditation period for EKA to track and include concrete data or examples of how the Erasmus+ programme has had a positive impact on the institution, its students and its staff. The same goes for the issue of the contribution of cooperation to learning outcomes, it would be useful to highlight examples of specific projects, initiatives or joint research activities that have directly influenced and contributed to the achievement of learning outcomes in the field of study and in the programmes concerned.

1.5.3.

EKA has developed good system and procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad within the study field, but the system is not functioning at its full potential. Teaching staff and students participate in both outgoing and incoming mobility, which provides added value to the implementation of the study process and the quality of studies. EKA representatives mentioned that low mobility of students is related to the fact that most of the students are employed. Teaching staff is quite active. And good is the aspect that in the future, it is planned to ensure the recruitment of the teaching staff in the status of elected teaching staff, which is also defined in the EKA development strategy. It is planned to attract teaching staff based on the previous experience with foreign partners, as well as through the Euroaxess network, of which EKA is also a member.

One of strategic tasks “To encourage students to participate in international activities, including participation in Erasmus+ mobility programmes, international week activities, etc.” begs for concrete outcome data. However, this cooperation for most part takes the shape of inter-institutional agreements or participation in international conferences. Also, when it comes to concrete student mobility numbers, EKA is rather vague. 15_Annex_Foreign_students_staff provides no information on outgoing or incoming students, also 16_annex_Student_mobility claims “there are no Erasmus+ students in the study direction, because study programmes were implemented in Latvian.” This claim is rather strange as the majority of EU's art programmes routinely accept foreign exchange students into programmes conducted in national languages. Furthermore, since 2018 study field Art employs foreign teaching staff, teaching in English. Also this doesn't explain a

lack of information on outgoing EKA's students. Collaboration Development Plan 2019-2023 states as strategic task P1J4U72: "To deepen cooperation with the existing strategic cooperation partners for the implementation of joint study modules or programmes, mobility of teachers and students, joint organisation of conferences, research, etc". Also, there are no joint study modules.

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

EKA collaborates with several institutions: companies, state and non-state organisations, professional associations, universities, colleges, secondary schools, etc. but the criteria for determining the reputation of cooperation partners are not defined and the criteria for partner selection are not clear. EKA cooperates with the institutions from abroad but more with higher education institutions and there is no assurance that the cooperation is sufficient and that such cooperation contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes. EKA has developed seems good system and procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad within the study field, but the system is not very effective because the number of included students has increased during the years but is not enough.

Strengths:

- 1) Are clearly defined the main directions of collaboration, also international.
- 2) Opportunities for international cooperation offered by Erasmus+ are used.
- 3) Teaching staff is quite active. And good is the aspect that in the future, it is planned to ensure the recruitment of the teaching staff in the status of elected teaching staff, which is also defined in the EKA development strategy.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The criteria for determining the reputation of cooperation partners are not defined and the criteria for partner selection are not clear.
- 2) EKA cooperates with the institutions from abroad but more with higher education institutions and there is not stated international cooperation with employers, employers' organisations, municipalities, non-governmental organisations, etc. within the framework of the study field.
- 3) EKA is not fully harnessing practical outcomes from international cooperation and collaboration exchanges.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The criteria for determining the reputation of cooperation partners are not defined and the criteria for partner selection are not clear.

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

Analysis

1.6.1.

Two study programmes were licensed (computer games/brand design) and the short term recommendations were all completed according to the self-reflection document. The recommendations were on organisation and personnel. Longer term aspirations to give an

international flavour to the lecturers was also completed. Financial aid to enlist international scholars was enacted with interesting results in projects and curricula (2) (these numbers refer to the recommendations in the previous assessment report) As in my earlier observations on research when external practices are brought into the curricula (3) then innovation and interesting responses and projects appear to take place. In 4-6 the programme of studies appear to have changed but there is no clear narrative on how these are now operating. 7 requires a little more detail, how many staff and what opportunities are being undertaken as opposed to just notifying them. (8) one assumes that the staffing levels will be explored in the field of study assessment. (9/10) are encouraging. (11) is interesting and in the report IMS2023 a low-engagement/excitement around Erasmus was identified as a weakness. (12-15) are completed. Brand Design.

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

EKA responded in a robust and appropriate manner to the recommendations. From experts visit experts can see that EKA have implemented the recommendations and are building on the developments needed.

Strengths:

- 1) The main issues of the previous report have been engaged robustly and implemented.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Small curricula issue in Brand Design needs resolving.

Assessment of the requirement [4]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The previous report has been sufficiently addressed.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|--|
| 1) Improve the quality policy implementation in all EKA departments and formulate what is the system because it is not stated in documents. |
| 2) Make the mechanism for submission of student anonymous complaints and suggestions, establishing procedure. |
| 3) Avoid using Russian in communication in web page and try to find alternatives how to reach students parents auditory. |
| 4) Establish a unique programme director position for every study programme, led by a person professionally linked with that field. Avoid the doubling when the study field director is also a director of the study programme under the field. |
| 5) Interconnection between the study programmes needs a cohesive strategy. Implement a stronger interdisciplinary engagement at a practical level. (for example, students proposed a closer collaboration, joint projects, between Interior Design and Game Design). |

6) Consider providing more courses on an up to date digital tool-sets professionally used in the respective study fields.
7) Establish a redundancy-free quality assessment pipeline which involves all the responsible parties in a clearly defined and logical way.
8) Revise the methodology and tasks of traditional art courses and bring it closer to the needs of the study programmes.
9) Implement a viable research structure (thematic clusters) and bring it closer to the study programmes.
10) Develop a strategic plan for the enhancement of creative research which encourages and reflects numerous forms of output but also enriches connections between staff and students work.
11) Explore and develop a strategic plan for KTP/KE development.
12) Advertise among EKA students via e-mail; student council; staff members; study programme directors etc. opportunity to attend psychological help.
13) In the webpage for each study programme indicate also implementation language.

Long-term recommendations

1) Ensure that the majority of teaching staff in the study programme are professionally related to that study programme.
2) Implement a life-long learning programme with a clear presence within the field of Arts.
3) Find ways how to engage more with industry to be up to date with latest trends and provide students with bigger exposure to the labour market.
4) Make stronger preventive system to prevent possible challenges in the study process in time, for example, prior discussions with the parties involved in order to make improvements, making more focus on international partnership.
5) Make and define more clear criteria for determining the reputation of cooperation partners and define the criteria for partner selection, including also international partners and cooperation with employers, employers' organisations, municipalities, non-governmental organisations, etc. within the framework of the study field.
6) Develop metrics how to compare artistic creation, teaching activities and research activities among staff members and how they should be rewarded, by focusing more on the artistic creation so it can be appreciated more, especially in the field of Arts.

II - "Interior Design" ASSESSMENT

II - "Interior Design" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

Study programme Interior design (42214) aims to prepare professional specialists in design and

interior design with analytical and critical thinking. Modelling interior design is also a part of artistic creation and based on creativity, therefore study programme is a part of study field arts, this is also supported by Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 where study programme group “design” fall under education thematic group “Arts”.

2.1.2.

Study programme Interior design (42214) is a professional study programme awarding professional bachelor’s degree in design and qualification “Designer of interior”. Study programme is implemented as full time and part-time studies. Full time programme is 160 credit points (CP) with duration of 4 years or 8 semesters long, while part-time programme is 4 years and 6 months or 9 semesters long. Both variants of the study programme are being implemented only in Latvian language. (SAR p. 62-64). Study programme aims to prepare specialists in design and interior design with analytical and critical thinking, whose knowledge and skills allow working with projects. (SAR 3.1.2. p. 66) Study programme objectives are to provide student-centred education aligned with the labour market, impart comprehensive architectural and interior design knowledge, enhance teaching quality, develop practical design skills, and establish international collaborations. (SAR 3.1.1. p. 65) Study programme aim and tasks lead to study programme results. Goals are to encompass skills in interior project composition, space and furniture design principles, preliminary analysis, concept formulation, full-scale design creation, presentation, material knowledge, organisation, teamwork, space evaluation, creative problem-solving, and informed decision-making during project construction and supervision. (SAR 3.1.2. p. 66) It is advisable to have less than 10 study programme outcomes. This will ensure that all learning outcomes do not overlap and are more precise. Admission requirements to enter the study programme are secondary education and examination in drawing, for both study programme implementation methods. EKA has approval for regulatory bodies to carry out additional examination before enrolment of students in this study programme. Study programme aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and supplement each other. Scope of the professional study programme and implementation language is also reasonable and justified.

2.1.3.

According to (SAR section 3.1.1. p. 65) during the reporting period, there have been no significant changes in the parameters of the study programme. Only significant changes made were for wording of the study results. Changes and rephrasing of study programme results were analysed and were changed because of changes in the labour market and changes in the content of the study courses. Such changes are supported and indicate development of study programme towards the needs of the labour market. The experts impressions from the report was that it was evident that the programme sets out to be practice focussed and works hard to maintain its relevance to industry. During the site interviews experts concluded that EKA management and study programme in general need to be clear that it must also challenge the needs of industry and not just follow what it does. In the long term this approach creates a possible disservice to the future development of the field of study. EKA should also consider bringing in more changes over time to prevent dropping out of the novelties, the design industry is fastly developing and programme also should be flexible to these changes.

2.1.4.

The study programme's economic and social justification lies in meeting the demand for highly qualified professionals in the labor market, reducing unemployment risk through higher education, and aligning with national and international skill development goals. The Ministry of Economics emphasises the value of educated individuals with lower unemployment rates. Humanities and arts graduates, including those from the study programme, exhibit a high employment rate (85.7%), contributing to the country's overall average (87.6%). The curriculum addresses essential competencies outlined by international recommendations and contributes to UN sustainability goals, combating poverty through graduate employment. The programme aligns with Latvia's Sustainable

Development Strategy and Education Development Guidelines, fostering creative, critical-thinking specialists in line with national priorities. There has been an observed rise in full-time student enrollment during the reporting period, despite some fluctuations. The number of students in the programme decreased from 109 in 2016/2017 to 89 in 2022/2023 academic years. This decrease has been attributed to a notable dropout rate, with the highest occurring in 2018/2019 - 22 students. Common reasons for dropout included financial limitations, relocation, work-study conflicts, and the COVID-19 impact afterwards. In SAR it was not specifically disclosed about the employment rate of the programme graduates.

2.1.5.

N/A

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

Study programme is relevant to the study field. The study programme has been evaluated and aligned with regulatory attachments. Study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and lead to successful finishing of the programme. During the reporting period the study programme did not undergo significant changes. Social and Economical justification of the study programme is based on Latvia's Sustainable Development Strategy and Ministry of Economics conclusions that professional higher education graduates have a better chance to enter the labour market.

Strengths:

1) No specific strengths to highlight.

Weaknesses:

1) None

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The topicality of the study programme is undefined. The main narrative states that it aims to address how students need to be specialised but also interdisciplinary, that they need to have skills. Experts anticipated some more detail on these aims, but more so these are very basic and fundamental ambitions of a beginning in Interior studies. The annexe of modules suggesting the content are complementary but many are not topical. For instance, to select one, architecture and design history, has only one publication in its reading list in the 2020's with many others over 20 years old. The reading lists for the history of interior design modules lack many of the numerous texts that are available in this field produced in the last 10-years alone. The narrative doesn't set out any reference to the topical issues of the day. The student survey - (fig 10) supports this view. Arguably Interiors, through building reuse, material usage is at the forefront of the sustainable agenda. Because of its capacity to host people in space, it's important to understand its role as a social and communal mediator which leads to issues of diversity, justice and so on. These are basic topicalities that interiors should include. The practice or industry focus of study field doesn't feel suitably robustly emphasised. Experts don't consider it is enough to suggest that some members of staff have various graphics, furniture, glass or communication practices. None of these are explicitly interior design so how explicitly interior-focussed material get taught in the programme is a problem that experts did not resolve during the site visit. The student survey (fig 8-onwards) suggests that the students are satisfied with the relevance of the programmes content.

Study programme compliance was evaluated according to outdated Cabinet of Ministers regulations,

but overall study programme complies with the new state education standard Cabinet of Ministers No. 305 (Analysis is available in Annex 23). Study programme is composed of study courses that are divided in 4 parts: A-overall education courses; B-Study field basic theoretical study courses; C-Study field specialised courses and D- Elective courses. Since students are very restricted in choosing B and C parts during their studies in the EKA, experts do not see a specific need to separate these course types and advise to join both of these parts together as B type courses (study field specific) and leave freely elective courses as C part. Such an approach is common in most of the Higher Education Institutions. Study programme includes at least 6 CP of entrepreneurship and law courses, 2 CP for civil and environmental course, 12 CP for state examination and 20 CP for internship these requirements are fulfilling state regulations. (Annex 23) Study programme also gives qualification to students - Designer of interior. The qualification is based on profession standard that was created on 2008 (<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/ps0414.pdf>) and currently can be described as outdated. During the interviews EKA Management indicated that they know about new standard, but it is not close to being renewed and they are not involved in this process.

2.2.2.

N/A

2.2.3.

The implementation of study methods, and the acquisition of knowledge appears to be via the traditional methods such as lectures, seminars, and so on. These will all contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes. The defence of the bachelor system is also the traditional method of achieving the aims of the programme. Differences between the full or part time modes are negligible.

It is clear that the new building is assisting in the learning cultures of the school and that studio space for the students study, the library and other spaces facilitate learning. Student-centred learning and principles are supported in the study processes and studio-based systems of learning. For instance, studio teaching is often based around making both physical as well as digital models.

2.2.4.

EKA have created internship regulations that are available for students, see Annex 21. Internship shall occur in accordance with the Agreement on the study internship and with the proposed schedule. This can also be found in the regulations. These regulations also provide guidelines for writing and defending the internship. To obtain professional qualification students need at least 20CP internship which is required from regulatory attachments, Cabinets of Ministers No. 305. The internship in interior design consists of two parts 12CP and 8CP accordingly. (Annex 27). There is also no indication about the length of the internships. Unfortunately experts could not find a systematic approach to how the obtained knowledge and experience during the internship is being evaluated among students. Furthermore, neither in SAR nor in Study plan or Study course descriptions EKA have provided more detailed information about internship organisation, evaluation criteria etc. There is also only a list of potential cooperation partners, not with actual statistics about internship place. During the site interviews students confirmed that they are aware about the internship in most of the cases they can find the place for themselves, if not study programme director, has helped to find internship place. The description suggests an internship 'review' as a device for assessing the experience is vague and is not defined with regards to what it might be. There is no data available with regards to how many students undertake internships, where (which practices, geographies) and duration of experience. The annexe for the regulations of the internship alludes to the study plan, which does not make explicit reference to the internships location in the curriculum.

2.2.5.

N/A

2.2.6.

The topicality of the student projects, final theses, heritage, hospitality, visual communication is relevant to the study programme and field of study. Heritage such as building reuse, hospitality such as bars, restaurants, hotels, spas are common. The subject matter corresponds to what would be expected in the outputs of a bachelor's degree via interiors. The selection of types of projects is teacher-led and it is supported by staffing experiences. This is to be expected and is seen in most equivalent bachelors experience.

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

The philosophy and aims of the programme, defined by the topicality of the content is not sufficiently defined. The programme is oriented towards practice and supporting students in their professional development. This is admirable but should be just one aspect of the development of the responsible and professional designer. An emphasis on other aspects of the range of interiors work would be useful and give the programme a broader appeal and wider remit but also help to define it in the market place. Building reuse, material innovation, social justice, the emphasis on body and space, people, communities, all kinds of work could be more explicitly articulated in order to enhance its philosophy and identity. The emphasis on practice also needs to incorporate how practice is critiqued and challenged and not just followed. This can quickly render programmes outdated if they do not continually lead on what practice should be doing.

Strengths:

- 1) The student final thesis represent some topicalities of the study programme
- 2) The professional dimension is appropriate

Weaknesses:

- 1) The topicality of the study programme is not sufficiently defined in the module specs or the narrative of the field of study
- 2) The programme needs to better articulate its philosophy and aims
- 3) The historical modules need completely updating and should reflect established and emerging topics directly aligned with the study field and design industry.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

EKA has established a system for determining and redistributing financial support required for study field implementation and corresponding study programmes. The funding of study fields and programmes is sourced from tuition fees and external financing, including project financing. External financing includes EU structural funds and international projects, comprising 29% of the budget. The implementation of study field is ensured by sufficient revenue and attraction of external financing. The funding for science and creative activity is derived from institutional resources and external

funding. The proportion of external funding for accredited study field is 39%, including project funding. Only recently EKA has moved to new premises. During the site interviews all of the parties indicated how satisfied they are with the new building. Experts also found the new premises suitable for study process. Students have access to the EKA library, which includes internal regulations, methodological documents, and instructions for the university's e-environment. The EKA Library is a member of the Latvian Academic Library Association (LATABA) and continuously updates its collection. The library collection is replenished based on librarian recommendations and teaching staff input. Students in EKA can use specific rooms where they can test out In study course descriptions there are examples where literature older than 10 years can be found. Experts would suggest renewing the literature base, literature that is older than 10 years in the design field can be considered as outdated. This also will serve as a healthy indication of updatign study programme in accordance to the trends of the industry. During site interviews EKA administration and staff members mentioned that staff regularly reviews study course content and informs the librarian of necessary acquisitions to renew the information base. The EKA website and app provide information on study processes, schedules, announcements, etc. Specialised premises and common areas are available for the study direction, including digital and design laboratories, drawing rooms, and workshops. Common areas include lecture rooms, conference rooms, library, administration rooms, and more. All lecture rooms are equipped with necessary materials and technical equipment, including computers and projectors. An e-environment is available for study processes, including the EKA website, app, Moodle, and BigBlue Button. Computers with internet access are available in the library's reading room. Various digital tools like Moodle, BigBlue Button, and others are used for teaching. Specialised computer programs like Archicad, Adobe Creative, AutoCAD, etc., are accessible to students. Each study programme has a dedicated forum on Moodle for communication and information sharing. All of mentioned material provision is enough to create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes.

2.3.2.

N/A

2.3.3.

Based on the SAR section 3.3.3. P.73 the revenue part of the university budget consists of various sources, including tuition fees, financing of international projects, financing of the Erasmus+ programme, revenues from lifelong learning programmes, and revenues from fulfilling orders from organisations. The university's financial reports indicate that it has sufficient financial resources and a stable financial situation to implement the study programme. For profitability of the study programme, the minimum number of students required is not less than 69. As of the beginning of the 2022/2023 study year, the number of students enrolled in the study programme "Interior Design" was 89. Study programme director indicated that expanses for Latvian and English implementation types are the same. Because of this the tuition fee for the study programme "Interior Design" is set at 2500.00 Euro per year even if the programme is not implemented in English. While considering factors like potential student dropout, additional investments, accreditation costs, and inflation, the university made a decision to maintain the planned price to promote the attraction of students and invest in the future development of the programme. Cost assessment of the study programme was determined in accordance with MK Regulations No. 994 "Procedure in which universities and colleges are financed from state budget funds". EKA also have taken into account the increase of utility bills and decided to leave study fees at 2500 EUR per year to ensure competitive price for potential students. Study place base cost calculation for one student should be updated and take into account a lot of changes since 2006 when the law was issued, but that is State related issue and does not influence compliance of the method how EKA determined study cost. (SAR section 3.3.3. p.74.)

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

The assessment of the higher education institution's study programme reveals several strengths and some areas that could benefit from improvement. The institution demonstrates a comprehensive approach to ensuring a high-quality study process, focusing on study provision, informative provision including the library, material and technical provision, and financial provision. Experts conclude that the literature base should be renewed more often ensuring that latest trends in the study field and the design industry are covered in the study process. Currently available literature and information base that is accessible to the students is sufficient and enough to ensure successful achievement of study course and study programme outcomes. Nevertheless experts urge the EKA administration to update and track more carefully if staff members have actually updated study course descriptions, specifically literature.

Strengths:

- 1) Tuition fee covers expenses per student and the study programme can be self-sustained.
- 2) Study environment now is located in new premises, which can inspire the study process.

Weaknesses:

- 1) None

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme material, informative and technical provisions combined with all financial aspects ensure that study programme is sustainable, can develop further and ensures achievement of learning outcomes. EKA also need to monitor stronger if the academic staff members are actually bringing the newest literature into the study course descriptions as mandatory information sources. This is only suggestion that does not influence overall evaluation of this criteria.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

The CV's of the staff exemplify numerous talented people with multiple skills and experience around the subject of crafts, such as glass, marketing and with some architecture, landscape, furniture and interiors related experiences. There is only one person who mentions interior as their focus and specialism. The interdisciplinary ambitions of the programme match this set of profiles. I would strongly recommend that the study programmes hires more experts with explicit and detailed focus on the interior. The core understanding and building blocks of a subject must be established by experts directly related to the field.

2.4.2.

Changes to staff have been acknowledged in order to reflect the practice-led orientation of the study field. Staff qualifications have also changed in that more have acquired PhD's. Whilst it would not appear to have had a negative impact on the quality and compliance of the programme, the shift towards a practice-led staffing team could be made more explicit as a strategic idea to the aims and objectives of the study programme.

2.4.3.

N/A

2.4.4.

There were no research outputs or lists attached to the reflective report supplied by EKA in both annex 12 and 13. This was concerning as the research focus is important for the renewal and refreshing of the programme, its aims and then its content.

2.4.5.

The narrative suggests that staff cooperate and work together in a supportive manner. For instance the report states that staff work well together and are cooperative.

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

The staff competencies are numerous but there is a deficit in direct and focussed interior design experience. This needs to be addressed. There were no research outputs from the staff in the reflective report. This was worrying as the emphasis on research in EKA is very important, as well as for the staff development and the programmes veracity as a study field.

Strengths:

1) The composition between EKA/Guest lecturers seems like a healthy balance.

Weaknesses:

1) There are no discernible research outputs listed

2) Following staff CV, experts conclude that the staffing profiles are not related explicitly to the study field. For instance in a programme of interior design it would be expected that the majority of the teaching staff all have interior design/interior architecture degrees.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The staff team lacks the explicit focus on interior design. Research outputs are not clearly outlined.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme compliance was evaluated based on Cabinet of Ministers regulations No.512. These regulations currently are outdated. Nevertheless the new regulations which are Cabinet of Ministers regulations No.305 are similar and evaluated compliance in general also complies with the new regulations. Experts would also recommend carefully review and describe in the EKA internal guidelines how the first article, paragraph 8 of Law on Higher Education Institutions will be applied to, determine CP amount. "Credit points are expressed in whole numbers. One credit point corresponds to 25-30 hours of study work." See annex 23.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme comply with a profession standard that was created at 20.08.2008 <https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/ps0414.pdf> , so currently this standard can be considered as outdated. Since this is the only profession standard that is in force for interior design specialists study programme compliance was evaluated to this standard and it complies with the standard. Experts indicate that full compliance is only because standard does not fully cover current industry needs and novelties. Experts would like to urge the university to work with the Ministry to renew the profession standard according to the latest labour market and education standards and if needed update study programme accordingly. See annex 24.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study course descriptions and the study materials have been prepared in Latvian and English languages and comply with the requirements set in Law on Higher Education Institutions. See annex 26. Experts team would advise to renew all literature that is older than 10 years, but this is not important enough to decrease criteria as partially compliant.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma provided to experts that is being issued for the completion of the study programme complies with the procedure how state recognised documents of higher education are issued in accordance to Cabinet of Ministers No.202.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Rector of EKA has signed document (annex 11.) that the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language (Latvian) in accordance with the regulations and can perform professional duties and office duties.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement according to the Cabinet of Ministers No. 70.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

University has provided cooperation agreement No. 4-16.1/21/02 (see annex 5) with Rezekne Technology Academy (RTA) that confirms that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. Students will be transferred to RTA professional Bachelor study programme "Interior design" providing qualification "Interior designer".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The higher education institution has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's licence is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme. Annex 6.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All legislation requirements and study programme organisation meets requirements set in regulatory framework. Note worthy EKA should create internal procedure for re-calculating CP amount based on the latest version of Law on Higher Education Institutions. EKA should get more involved in the development of new profession standard.

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

Study programme in general complies with the state education standard and with professional standard. Biggest issues regarding legislative matters is that compliance was evaluated with outdated Cabinet of Ministers regulations that currently have been updated. Nevertheless, the study programme still complies with regulatory requirements. The topicality of the study programme is undefined some of the study programme aims are very basic and fundamental ambitions of a beginning in Interior studies. Not all study courses can be considered as related to the interior industry. The implementation of study methods are achieved with a standard methodological approach. Such a teaching approach leads to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. Regarding Material-technical base and resources, EKA has covered infrastructure needs allowing students the access to new equipment. Additionally EKA is also working to improve and develop the staff competencies. Study programme is able to sustain itself and the tuition fee covers all expenses per student. Unfortunately there is not enough evidence to demonstrate that teaching staff is related to the interior design industry.

Strengths:

1) Study programme material-technical base can be considered as good and tuition fee is higher than expenses per student.

Weaknesses:

1) Some of the study courses experts conclude as historic and they need updating so they match actual needs of the industry.

2) In regards to teaching staff the staffing profiles are not related explicitly to the study field

3) There are no discernible research outputs listed

Evaluation of the study programme "Interior Design"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Interior Design"

Short-term recommendations

1) Define the unique philosophies, aims, intentions of the programme and articulate them as ways to market the offer.

2) Develop a staffing strategy to employ staff with the relevant qualifications and experience and implement it in a manner that clearly aligns staff with relevant experience in relation to the study field (2-year maximum).

3) Develop research strategies that goes beyond financial support in order to support and enhance creative research outputs. (2-year maximum)

Long-term recommendations

1) Update the historical aspect of the programme content to reflect established and emerging ideas in the field.

II - "Computer Game Design" ASSESSMENT

II - "Computer Game Design" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

Study programme "Computer game design" (43214) Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 where study programme group "design" fall under education thematic group "Arts". Since study programme aims to prepare designers who have versatile knowledge of game design and art using computer technologies.

2.1.2.

Study programme "Computer game design" (43214) is academic study programme awarding bachelor's degree: Bachelor of Humanities in Design. Study programme is implemented as full time and part-time studies. Full time programme is 120 credit points (CP) with duration of 3 years or 6 semesters long, while part-time programme is 3 years and 6 months or 7 semesters long. In Latvian language study programme is being implemented as fulltime and part time studies, but in English language only as full-time programme. (SAR p. 79-80). The objective of the study programme is to equip students with a diverse understanding of game design and art, specialized proficiency in computer game development and technology, and the capabilities to thrive competitively in both the domestic and global job markets. (SAR p. 78). Study programme objectives are to create a compliant and student-centered study process, imparting computer game design knowledge, enhancing practical engagement, qualifying teaching staff, developing necessary infrastructure, and fostering international collaborations. (SAR 3.1.2. p. 82) Study programme aim and tasks lead to study programme results. Study programme goals are to include expertise in design theories and trends, software usage, ethical principles, and justifying choices; proficiency in game development, documentation, analysis, and teamwork; and the ability to creatively solve design problems and inform enterprise decisions. It is advisable to have less than 10 study programme outcomes. This will ensure that all learning outcomes do not overlap and are more precise. Admission requirements for all study programme implementation options and languages are secondary education, but for English flow study programme also B2 level of language knowledge is required to enroll. Study programme aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and supplement each other. Scope of the academic study programme and both implementation languages are also reasonable and justified. 10 out of 14 listed learning outcomes of the study

programme (“Results of the study programme”, SAR, page 79) are directly linked to the game design, yet the course load (27_Annex_Study_plan_DIG.docx) allocates too little attention to the core of the study programme (game design).

2.1.3.

Study programme has undergone serious changes. First of all, only recently English as an implementation language was added, this allowed to strengthen established international connections with foreign educational institutions. (SAR section 3.1.1. p. 81) Secondly, the study programme has been changed from a professional bachelor programme to an academic study programme. Because of this also study programme parameters changed to previously described under 2.1.2. point. Experts concluded and during the site interviews found out that all of the changes have been discussed and evaluated by involving all stakeholders. These changes have been analysed and are justified. During the site visit students confirmed that teaching staff is capable of implementing study programme in English. Study programme director mentioned that biggest changes in the curriculum were based on decreasing CP for internship from 20CP to 8CP and taking out graphic design courses since they were not fully relevant to the study programme name.

2.1.4.

The program's economic and social justification is supported in Latvia's Design Strategy (2017-2020) although it is outdated, but the overall goals for game design industry have not changed. The programme is aiming to strategically harness design's potential for economic growth and cultural identity. Given the global growth of game design and its interdisciplinary applications, the programme meets a need for skilled professionals in the rapidly expanding computer games industry. Graduates' versatile design and ICT skills align with labor market demand in both the game design sector and the broader ICT field, making the programme relevant for Latvia's economy and its international standing. (SAR section 3.1.3. p.83) The study programme has witnessed a substantial increase in the number of students, attributed to enhanced study quality and growing interest in the field of computer game development. This surge aligns with the rising popularity of this field and the recruitment of fresh teaching staff with contemporary insights. Notably, student enrollment grew from 53 in 2018/2019 to 125 in 2022/2023, reflecting the program's appeal. (SAR section 3.1.4. p.84-85) In SAR it was not specifically disclosed about employment rate of the programme graduates only reference to all EKA students: Employment of EKA graduates is 85.7%, including 4.4% who have founded companies. (SAR section 3.1.3. p.84)

2.1.5.

N/A

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

Study programmes are relevant to the study field. The study programme has been evaluated and aligned with regulatory attachments. Study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and lead to successful finishing of the programme. During the reporting period the study programme underwent significant changes. First of all it was changed to an academic study programme following EKA strategic goals to focus more on the academic environment, secondly the study programme took out graphical design courses and thirdly internship was reduced from 20CP to 8CP. Social and Economical justification of the study programme is based on Latvia's Design Strategy (2017-2020) and overall growing gaming industry needs.

Strengths:

- 1) Study programme graduates can easily find job in the industry after finishing studies.
- 2) English implementation can attract foreign students to EKA.

Weaknesses:

1) None

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

Even though, the content of the study programme is being periodically monitored assessed, analysed and evaluated by the Study Council thus ensuring a viable topical content, and despite the fact that part of the programme's teachers are simultaneously employed in the game industry, which enables better understanding of the market needs and trends, the programme needs substantial overhaul.

Even though, EKA responded to student survey, which expressed a desire for more "practical courses, by stating "Study plan is changed, including more specific study courses" (8_Annex_Survey_results.docx pg. 19), basic positions, principles, structure and methodology of the branch, or in other words, hands-on game design practical courses, amount to about only 24CP of the total load of the programme ("Basic of Computer Game Design and Development" —A.Mayes 4 CP, "Game Programming" —M.Žigunovs 4CP, "Programming and Prototyping of 2D Computer Games" —M.Žigunovs 6CP, "3D Modeling and Animation" —Husted Brynaa Bach 4CP, "Programming and Prototyping of 3D Computer Games"—M.Žigunovs 6CP), together with "Project paper" 16CP, which in itself allows for some practical engagement in building game prototype, it comes to around 40CP out of total load of 120CP. Furthermore, these practical courses are being taught exclusively by guest lecturers. In itself, the practice of engaging guest lecturers to teach specialised practical courses has many positive sides, but it needs to be coordinated by the faculty who are specialists in this specific field. In the case of Game Design programme, none of 5 faculty members constituting the programme (28_Annex_Professors_DIG), including director of study programme are related to, coming from, or actively engaged in the field of Computer Games.

Study programme could benefit from more refurbished CP layout (making larger study blocks: a core of 10 CP study block, leading to practical outcome and 10 CP of the other courses per semester), Another point worth mentioning, is an advice mentioned by the expert team to renew all literature that is older than 10 years. It is especially noteworthy in cases where specific software is being taught. For example, books such as Totten, C. (2012). Game Character Creation with Blender and Unity. John Wiley & Sons., Eng, LZ (2015). Building a Game with Unity and Blender. Packt Publishing Ltd., Mullen, T. (2010). Introducing character animation with Blender. John Wiley & Sons. and similar., should be replaced with the publications addressing current versions of Blender and Unity. Experts also found that there's a demand for an interdisciplinary focus especially between Interior Design and Game Design programmes. It was brought to experts' attention the similarities between interior visualisation and game level creation. Specifically, both fields share a similar tool-set (basic knowledge of and ability to achieve creative goals in 3D environment) and methodology when it comes to cultivation of specific student skills. It would be a very fruitful and academically viable approach to offer joint-modules combining a practical tool-training environment for both study programmes.

Study programme is composed of study courses that are divided in 3 parts: A-overall education courses; B-Strictly elective courses (Industry specific) and C- Freely elective courses. Study programme includes at least 6 CP of entrepreneurship and law courses, 2 CP for civil and environmental course, 12 CP for defense work and additionally what is not required but gives valuable insight into the labour market 18 CP for 2 internships and 1 course work. These requirements are fulfilling state regulations for Academic study programme. (Annex 23)

2.2.2.

N/A

2.2.3.

The curricular layout of this academic bachelor programme leans towards theory, also towards a theory which is only partially related to the core of the programme. The methodology of delivery of knowledge, or implementation mechanisms are primarily structured through seminars/lectures and not so much through practical lab work. Statements such as "Teaching staff use a variety of teaching and assessment methods" and "Students are involved in creative activities under the guidance of teaching staff" (Pdf_1874_EN_v2_modified.pdf, pg. 88) need further clarification, or concrete examples.

Thus the type of knowledge delivered to students is for most part theoretical, when this programme should deliver practical and concrete know-how skills in game design, along with the enhanced ability to critically reflect on the role of gaming in society.

Implementation methods grounded upon methodology of project-based studies— a standard approach in the majority of studio art and design programmes. Project Work 2D Game and Project Work 3D Game courses as mentioned in (Pdf_1874_EN_v2_modified.pdf, pg. 85) are steps in right direction, they are however not listed in curriculum (27_Annex_Study_plan_DIG.docx), neither there is a course description presented in 26_Annex_SKA_DIG_ENG.zip of these courses. Unless they are the same courses as listed "Programming and Prototyping of 2D Computer Games" and "Programming and Prototyping of 3D Computer Games".

Pass/non pass grading. "The criterion for evaluating study results is a mark in the 10-point system" (SAR section section 3.2.3. p. 87). The programme should consider implementing a pass/non-pass grading option for the practical core modules, which alleviates the teaching load from sometimes unnecessary and frivolous grading, gives students the opportunity to complete a course without affecting their overall grade point average, also making the course less stressful and more open to experimentation and artistic innovation and providing an easier framework for group work. It would also reduce the pressure of grading higher, as provision 3.10. of (EKA_Nolikums_kvalitates_nodrosinasana_2019.pdf) states: "The academic staff are obliged to provide written comments on the student's individual e-learning assignments and written examination work, if the evaluation is less than 8 points".

Implement the practical part as part of the final (Bachelor) thesis. At the moment, the final engagement of the student at the programme, which is supposed to present evidence of successful acquisition of skills and know-how relevant to the branch, is being presented in the form of text, and not the actual game project.

EKA states: "3.4. Study process organisation involves the acquisition of different skills and knowledge, thus the UEC academic staff use different teaching methods."(EKA_Nolikums_kvalitates_nodrosinasana_2019.pdf) —It is a very good approach and one can only wish seeing tis implemented in Game Design programme.

There was no compelling evidence provided to reach out to the standard of student-centered learning and teaching. There are elements of practical group-work or extra-curricular activities such as "Game Jam" and some internships; overall however, there is lack of evidence of student initiated acts when it comes to the content of concrete projects or in deciding which technical tools to use.

Worth mentioning, despite the fact that the programme is listed as Latvian language (both part time and fulltime. SAR pg. 79) a significant amount of subjects, the ones taught by foreign faculty, are delivered in English. It is not clear if translation is necessary and provided in case of necessity.

2.2.4.

It is hard to asses a scope and a true impact of the internship programme because of reasons stated below. "14_Annex_List_partners" provides a list of internships conducted by Game Design programme students. Namely, SIA „Overly", Sabre Games, SIA"Sensora", Biedrība „Urban Narratives", SIA 3D Engineering. It is a sufficient list to consider an internship program at Game Design as satisfactory. The feedback is however missing. There's no student feedback on the experience gained in these internships, neither presence of internship reviews within the materials

provided. The reverse feedback (8_Annex_Survey_results.docx) is provided albeit scarce and rather vague. Thus it is hard to assess the factual impact of the internships.

2.2.5.

N/A

2.2.6.

As per provided evidence, (Pdf_1874_EN_v2_modified.pdf, 3.2.6. pg. 89), it would be feasible to positively confirm that topics listed among the students' final theses ("Concept and design development of a collectible card game for young people", "The essential design elements of educational computer games for children.", "Using Virtual Reality Technology for Panic Attack Prevention", "Using games to promote public participation. "Effects of video games on mental health.", "Impact of console video game user interface on player experience" and etc), are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme. It is also satisfactory in the light of programmes shift from professional to academic bachelor.

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

It is a programme which underwent a considerable overhaul in the last couple years: focus is being sharpened on Game Design, Graphic Design part of the programme is being amended. At the same time the programme is changed from professional bachelor to academic bachelor, a switch which has its own merits, but also poses some risks. Firstly, an academic bachelor shortens the programme from 4 to 3 years thus potentially decreasing the number of credit points allocated to practical disciplines. To balance this potential danger, the programme removed the Graphic design part and focused solely on Game Design. Also, 20CP internship is being reduced to 8 CP, further diminishing the possibility of hands-on experience gained in industry. On the other hand, students are largely satisfied with the choice of the internships. As compensation for reduction of practical experience, EKA started to organise Game Jams for its Game design students. On the other hand, an academic bachelor would strengthen a research aspect of the programme. This however needs more clearly defined strategies, goals and time-plan. In order to attract a wider applicant list, the programme is offered as bi-lingual, taught in Latvian and English. There are two major areas which require attention, The curricular make-up of the programme, and the implementation of the relevant and effective research. As became evident from the on-site interviews, the programme urgently needs more courses which address basic positions, principles, structure and methodology of the branch, or in other words, hands-on game design practical courses. Some other findings were: the programme needs to increase the number of faculty who are actually professionally linked with the field of computer games and have longer (than one semester) contract types. Also, the programme needs a functional and unique director of the programme, preferably coming from the field directly linked to the programme itself. At the moment, there's one person, serving roles of director of the study field and simultaneously that of 3 programme directors. Also, it would be recommended to implement, if possible, a pass/non pass evaluation option. Programme should consider implementing a two-tier bachelor thesis, as is common among most art programmes, consisting of written and practical parts. The practical element of the thesis could also serve as a jump-board for the research activities.

Strengths:

- 1) To expand academic engagement and foster a variety of curricular strategies EKA organised Game Jams.
- 2) Curricular flexibility: "UEC academic staff use different teaching methods.". (Although it would be beneficial to see some factual evidence).
- 3) The programme is bi-lingual, taught in Latvian and English.
- 4) Quantitatively, an internship programme at Game Design is satisfactory.

5) As per provided evidence, (Pdf_1874_EN_v2_modified.pdf, 3.2.6. pg. 89), positively confirm that the topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme.

Weaknesses:

1) Programme urgently needs more courses which address basic positions, principles, structure and methodology of the branch, or in other words, hands-on game design practical courses.

2) Programme urgently needs to increase the number of faculty who are actually professionally linked with the field of computer games.

4) Not enough courses leading to practical outcomes. Project Work 2D Game and Project Work 3D Game courses as mentioned in (Pdf_1874_EN_v2_modified.pdf, pg. 85) are steps in right direction, they are however not listed in curriculum (27_Annex_Study_plan_DIG.docx), neither there is a course description presented in 26_Annex_SKA_DIG_ENG.zip of these courses.

6) Bachelor thesis is in text only. EKA shall implement a two-tier bachelor thesis, as is common among most art programmes, consisting of written and practical parts. Also evaluation of the thesis should be weighted in favour of the practical work.

7) Programmes lack unique programme directors. The head of study field also serves as programme director of each programme within the field.

8) Qualitatively, it is hard to assess the effectiveness of internship programmes as respondents provided no student feedback on the experience gained in these internships, nor any of the internship reviews.

9) Interdisciplinarity. Experts found that there's a demand for an interdisciplinary focus especially between Interior Design and Game Design programmes. It was brought to experts' attention the similarities between interior visualisation and game level creation.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

-

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

The EKA has a sufficient material and technical base for the implementation of this study programme. First of all, experts evaluate the new facilities that EKA has moved only at the end of 2022. Facilities and laboratory equipment for students in some places have been bought brand new. Students have the opportunity to use the facilities and develop their apps, game designs etc. Some of the labs are ensuring different tables, computers, Virtual reality glasses for IOS and Windows operating systems. To train their design skills graphic plane-tables XP-Pen G430 Students and staff members during site interviews indicated that they also have enjoyed game jams, which can be conducted at new premises. Study programme tuition fee has been set to 2500 EUR per academic year and it currently exceeds the average cost per student which is only 2054,58 EUR per year. (SAR section 3.3.3. p. 90) For the study programme to be rentable EKA has calculated that they need at least 88 students, and last academic year they had 125, so currently the study programme is self sufficient. Library and research tools are also at the disposal of students. Although during the interviews students described that they feel already fully covered with materials included in the

moodle system. Because of this they do not oftenly use the Library. Nevertheless, help from Library staff was praised and if students have searched something specific they have found it with help of the library on their own. Since study programme has recently transitioned from professional to academic one experts see that there is a lot of room for more academic research or applied research area to be developed. The premises, available resources and financial aspects of study programme create prerequisites to achieve study programme learning outcomes. Technical support is crucial for high quality implementation of study programme and currently it can be described as sufficient.

2.3.2.

N/A

2.3.3.

During the site interview study programme director indicated that expenses for English and Latvian implementation types are the same. Because of this it is hard do differentiate differences between both implementation types. Also usually English implementation and work with international students is harder for not native speakers hence can be rewarded more. EKA could make international study programmes a little bit more expensive since tuition fees can still be considered as competitive. As described above, the student programme student amount is sufficient and ensures the study programme's financial viability. Since tuition fee is higher than average costs per student, EKA can accumulate additional resources that afterwards can be relocated for development of study programme. This is a crucial step for study programme further development since IT technologies are changing and developing rapidly especially in the gaming industry to ensure the best quality end product. This can be challenging to sustain infrastructure that can actually meet industry needs.

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

The study programme provision for scientific, informative, material and technical base are sufficient to create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes. Students have acces to the field and study programme specific equipment. Financial provision of the study programme is in good condition and allows planning ahead for development of study programme material base.

Strengths:

1) Tuition fee covers all student expenses and is set even higher allowing to accumulate additional resources for development of study programmes.

Weaknesses:

1) Transition to an academic study programme may be difficult in terms of generating academic research.

2) In the long term it can be hard to sustain infrastructure at high quality so it can meet gaming industry requirements.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Currently experts did not find strong evidence of academic research provision that should be in place since study programme is academic one, but experts also take into account that this

change has happened only recently. Additionally since IT field is developing quite fast, also in gaming industry, in a few years available equipment at EKA will be considered as not modern.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

The teaching staff is distributed inappropriately to maintain a viable study programme. EKA states: 26 teachers are involved in the implementation of the study programme, 17 or 65% of whom have EKA as a main workplace and 9 guest lecturers, or 35%; (Pdf_1874_EN_v2_modified.pdf, pg. 91), it however doesn't provide a professional breakdown of the teaching staff.

As evident from 13_Annex_List_publications_creative_works_staff, 27_Annex_Study_plan_DIG, 28_Annex_Professors_DIG and 9_Annex_List_of_staff, only 3 of 26 teachers involved in the implementation of the study programme (all guest lecturers) exhibit a sufficient professional experience in the field of study. 9 teach in the fields adjacent to the branch, such as: information technologies, history of gaming, 2D animation, augmented reality, intro to design, audio design, colour theory, composition, drawing and painting, character design/anatomy, and 3 in the fields of relevance to the branch such as philosophy, sociology, drawing and painting, and the rest 9 in the fields of disputed relevance to the field of study.

When it comes to English language proficiency among the staff members, as evident from the provided material "CV_ENG_ART", at this moment, all faculty possess a knowledge of English at a level of B2 or higher.

These positive measures however do not remedy the key problem of the programme— too little staff has academic affinity or professional experience with, or is directly involved within a field of study: computer game design. Thus, it is not entirely evident that the qualification of the teaching staff can help achieve the programmes results.

2.4.2.

As listed in the report, EKA took steps to bring the expertise of the teaching staff closer to requirements of the study programme. (Pdf_1874_EN_v2_modified.pdf, pg. 92) quote: "the teaching staff has changed, attracting additional teaching staff with doctoral degrees (additional 7 teachers) and attracting industry specialists from game development companies with contemporary vision and knowledge of the latest trends. the number of teaching staff with a doctoral degree participating in the study programme has increased from 3 to 10 (7 are EKA teaching staff). The number of participating associate professors has increased from 1 to 4 associate professors, all of whom are elected to the EKA. During the reporting period, 4 foreign guest lecturers started working in the programme - Efe Duyan, Adam Mayes, Konstantinos Koumpiadis, Tau Tjalfe Husted Brynaa." Respondent attracted additional 7 teachers with a doctoral degree, increased the number of associated professors to 4, and also attracted 4 foreign guest lecturers.

These positive measures however do not remedy the key problem of the programme— too little staff is directly involved within a field of study: computer game design.

2.4.3.

N/A

2.4.4.

Academic staff formally fulfils the criteria as stated in 2.4.4., however the focus area is wide and not always relevant to the study programme. For example such thematic focus: "Opportunities for the Development of International Cooperation for Professional Orchestra", or "An integrated process-based approach to intellectual capital management", and "Entrepreneurs' competences in the business environment" falls closer to the realm of marketing and business management and is for the most part irrelevant to the study fields "Arts".

2.4.5.

As listed in the report, “teaching staff of the study programme collaborates in preparing study course descriptions, creating e-courses in the e-environment, working in research directions and projects effectively.” Also, “Teaching staff collaborate in evaluating students' project works and in creative activities, e.g. Game Jam events.” (Pdf_1874_EN_v2_modified.pdf, pg. 93). It provides satisfactory albeit vague and minimal evidence about mutual cooperation of the teaching staff. One hindrance to sustainable cooperation among the staff members, which surfaced during the interviews, is the short-term contracts (one semester) of most faculty, teaching the practical game design courses.

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

The programme exhibits a good student-teacher ratio. Members of the academic staff exhibit a satisfactory level of academic and artistic activities, albeit not always in the fields relevant to the core subject area of the study field Arts. Cooperation between the staff members within the study field needs a more active presence. Also the director of the study programme comes from a different field. Measures taken to bring expertise of the teaching staff closer to requirements of the study programme are insufficient. Only 3 of 26 teachers involved in the implementation of the study programme Game Design (all guest lecturers) exhibit sufficient professional experience in the field of study.

Strengths:

- 1) A good student-teacher ratio.
- 2) Members of the academic staff exhibit a satisfactory level of academic activities.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The teaching staff is distributed inappropriately to maintain a viable study programme.
- 2) Measures taken to bring expertise of the teaching staff closer to requirements of the study programme are insufficient. Only 3 of 26 teachers involved in the implementation of the study programme (all guest lecturers) exhibit sufficient professional experience in the field of study.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Expertise of the professorial teaching staff lies in the fields outside of the scope of the study programme. Director of the study programme Computer Game Design comes from a different field. Only 3 of 26 teachers involved in the implementation of the study programme (all guest lecturers) exhibit sufficient professional experience in the study programme.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard Cabinet of

Ministers No. 240. Study programme is 3 years (full time) 3,5 years(part time) long awarding 120 CP covering mandatory and elective part study courses. Experts would recommend to carefully review and describe in the internal guidelines how the first article, paragraph 8 of Law on Higher Education Institutions is(will be) applied, especially this part: Credit points are expressed in whole numbers. One credit point corresponds to 25-30 hours of study work;. See annex 23.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study course descriptions and the study materials have been prepared in Latvian and English languages and comply with the requirements set in Law on Higher Education Institutions. See annex 26. Experts team would advise to renew all literature that is older than 10 years, but this is not important enough to decrease criteria as partially compliant.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma provided to experts that is being issued for the completion of the study programme complies with the procedure how state recognised documents of higher education are issued in accordance to Cabinet of Ministers No.202.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The university has provided confirmation that academic staff of the Bachelor study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Annex 28.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Rector of university has signed document (annex 11.) that the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language (Latvian) in accordance with the regulations and can perform professional duties and office duties.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Rector of university has signed document (annex 11.) that the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2 level proficiency in English language in accordance with the regulations and can perform professional duties and office duties.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement according to the Cabinet of Ministers No. 70.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

There is cooperation agreement with Daugavpils university, but it is for professional bachelor study programme, not academic one that students will be able to continue studies in professional Bachelor study programme. EKA has to renew the agreement so it matches academic Bachelor study programme, then the point can be evaluated as fully compliant.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The higher education institution has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme. Annex 6.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Agreement about continuing studies in different HEI also should be renewed, these are minor deficiencies that can be eliminated in short term, if so the study programme can be evaluated as fully compliant. EKA should create internal procedure for re-calculating CP amount based on the latest version of Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

The study programme in question has recently undergone significant changes aimed at aligning it with the strategic goals of the institution and the evolving needs of the industry. These changes include transitioning from a professional bachelor's programme to an academic bachelor's programme, with a reduced duration from 4 to 3 years. However, this shift raises concerns about a potential decrease in practical experience due to a reduction in credit points allocated to practical disciplines, removal of the Graphic Design component, and a decrease in internship credit points from 20CP to 8CP. To address this, the programme has introduced Game Jams to compensate for the reduction in practical experience. The programme aims to balance the academic aspect by strengthening research, but this requires clearer strategies and goals. Additionally, the programme is now offered in both Latvian and English to attract a wider range of applicants. Several areas require attention, including the need for more hands-on game design practical courses, increased faculty with professional expertise in computer games, and a dedicated programme director with a direct link to the game design field. The implementation of a pass/fail evaluation option and a two-tier bachelor thesis, comprising written and practical components, is also recommended to enhance the program's effectiveness. Despite some challenges, the programme maintains a good student-teacher ratio and a satisfactory level of academic and artistic activities among the faculty, although their expertise does not always align with the program's core subject area. Collaboration among staff members within the study field joining students on projects from interior design with computer game design needs improvement, and efforts to bring the teaching staff's expertise closer to the program's requirements are deemed insufficient. Only a minority of teachers possess sufficient professional experience in the field of study, mainly guest lecturers.

Strengths:

- 1) Programme is being implemented in Latvian and English.
- 2) The topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme.
- 3) Members of the academic staff exhibit a satisfactory level of academic and artistic activities.
- 4) Tuition fee covers all student expenses and is set even higher allowing to accumulate additional resources.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Programme is lacking courses which address basic positions, principles, structure and methodology of the hands-on game design practical courses.
- 2) The programme needs a functional and unique director of the programme, preferably coming from the field directly linked to the programme itself. At the moment, there's one person, serving roles of director of the study field and simultaneously that of 3 programme directors.
- 3) In the long term it can be hard to sustain infrastructure at high quality so it can meet gaming industry requirements.
- 4) Expertise of the teaching staff is incommensurate to the profile of the study programme. All five professors/assoc. Professors indicated in the study programme, that are required to deliver academic study programme have their expertise in other fields.

Evaluation of the study programme "Computer Game Design"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Computer Game Design"

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|--|
| 1) Offer courses on anthropology and psychology enabling to understand player motivations and avoid the dangers of addictive gaming. |
| 2) Implement student feedback on the experience gained during the internships. |
| 3) Strengthen digital tool training, relevant to the study programme. |
| 4) Bring methodology and tasks of the art course closer to the needs of the study programme. |

Long-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| 1) Expertise of the teaching staff is incommensurate to the profile of the study programme. Programme needs to substantially increase the number of faculty who are actually professionally linked with the field computer games. |
| 2) Implement a viable research strategy. Game(ing) related research cluster through which practical applied research relevant to computer games shall be conducted. |
| 3) Increase CP of the study courses focusing on 3D animation, and game-design specific digital tool-set. |
| 4) Hire the staff members who teach the core subjects of the discipline on a longer than one semester term and have them involved in the shaping of the curricular structure of the programme. |
| 5) Increase of project-based or practically oriented course load. Also drawing and painting courses should be better attuned to the needs of the programme and real life expectations. |
| 6) Consider implementation of pass/no-pass grading system for the practical courses in this study programme. |
| 7) Consider implementation of some practical element as part of a bachelor thesis. |

8) Hire a director of the programme, preferably coming from the field of computer games.
9) Implement an evaluation of the internship programmes based on participating students feedback.
10) Implement joint courses leading to interdisciplinary outcomes between Game Design and Interior Design programmes.
11) Programme needs more courses which address basic positions, principles, structure and methodology of the branch—game design practical courses.
12) Create a financial plan-strategy for purchasing and renewing the infrastructure specifically IT related so it always can be at the same level as in the industry and students can work on up to date equipment.
13) Too many point graded courses. It is not clear if Game Design has a pass/non pass evaluation option. If not, it needs to be implemented.

II - "Brand Design" ASSESSMENT

II - "Brand Design" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

Study programme Brand design (45214) aims to provide students with a set of knowledge, skills and competence in design, who are able to create the organisation's visual identity and visual communication. Programme is in close relation to artistic creation and study of the field of arts. Study programme code also falls under Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 where study programme group "design" falls under education thematic group "Arts".

2.1.2.

Study programme Brand design (45214) is academic study programme awarding Master of Humanities in design degree. Study programme is being implemented only as a full-time study programme with Latvian and English implementation languages. Full time study programme is 80 CP with duration of 2 years (4 semesters). (SAR p. 96-97) The objective of the study programme is to provide students with a set of knowledge, skills and competence in design, who are able to create the organisation's visual identity and visual communication in accordance with its business philosophy, using modern design solutions. (SAR p. 95). Study programme objectives are to align the study process with regulations and labour market demands, recruiting qualified staff for student-centred learning, providing in-depth knowledge in branding and management, fostering independent research and creative skills, and developing the ability to create diverse brand designs and innovative proposals across various media. (SAR section 3.1.2. p. 99) Study programme aims and tasks reflect the study programme results. Learning outcomes of the programme encompass understanding brand design creation, modern principles, and research methods. Graduates can craft brand designs aligned with organisational philosophy, audience, and market demand, utilising contemporary technology. They can discuss brand design aspects, conduct independent research, present results effectively, create comprehensive design projects, analyse problems critically, and develop innovative solutions in brand design. It is advisable to have less than 10 study programme outcomes. This will ensure that all learning outcomes do not overlap and are more precise. Although all of the parameters have been described, experts are worried that in reality the study programme is focusing more on entrepreneurship and management, than brand design itself as programme name implies. EKA should address this and ensure that study programme is relevant to the study field arts,

not other study fields. Admission requirements for all study programme implementation methods and languages are as follows Bachelor degree of Art/ Bachelor degree in Humanities or Second Level Professional Higher Education in Economics or Management Science/Bachelor degree in Natural Sciences in Computer Science or Information Technology with at least 2 years of experience in the Management of the Company or its Structural Unit. Additionally for the English flow study programme also B2 level of language knowledge is required to enrol. Study programme aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and supplement each other. Scope of the academic study programme and both implementation languages are also reasonable and justified. (SAR p.95.)

2.1.3.

Study programme only recently has been licensed and is new, so currently no corrections in the programme have been indicated. (SAR section 3.1.1. p. 98) This also can be a potential risk for further development because during the site interview with one student, experts could not find indication that EKA representatives have shown interest about study programme improvements while it is only taking first steps into implementation.

2.1.4.

The study program's economic and social justification is grounded in the interdisciplinary nature advocated by OECD and educational guidelines 2021-2027. Combining art, management, and technology, the programme aligns with design's strategic role in business and develops skills like creativity and digital competence. With higher employment rates for art graduates in Latvia, the programme responds to the projected 10% growth in demand for tech-savvy and creative professionals in the commercial services sector, fittingly supported by its interdisciplinary curriculum. Commenced in 2022, the programme effectively addresses contemporary demands with its holistic approach and during the first year enrolled 7 students.

2.1.5.

N/A

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

Study programme is relevant to study field Art. Programme has been compared with regulatory requirements and experts conclude that it complies with them. Study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and lead to successful finishing of the programme. Since the programme is new, experts have concerns that EKA is not communicating enough with students to receive the best feedback about how curriculum is being implemented or how it can be changed. Program's economic and social justification is grounded in the interdisciplinary nature advocated by OECD and educational guidelines 2021-2027. Combining art, management, and technology, the programme enables students to become multifunctional specialists in brand design.

Strengths:

- 1) Study programme has great potential in the future to prepare interdisciplinary specialists.
- 2) English implementation can attract foreign students to EKA.

Weaknesses:

- 1) EKA management is not proactive enough to ensure shaping of the study programme at its first implementation years.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The content of the study programme is topical, the content of the study courses / modules is interconnected and complementary, but partly corresponds to the objectives of the programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes, as well as meets the needs of the industry, labour market and scientific trends.

According to the EKA report, the programme is interdisciplinary and includes courses in both design and management which includes the basic knowledge in design for those whose previous education is related to design, and management knowledge for those students whose previous education is not related to management knowledge. This aspect shows there is no necessary depth in the brand design and in study programmes are missing such important aspects for brand design as marketing psychology, integrated marketing communications etc. Study programme is composed of study courses that are divided in 3 parts: A-overall education courses; B-Strictly elective courses (Industry specific) and C- Freely elective courses. Study programme includes 2 CP for civil and environmental course if such course has not been taken on Bachelor level, 20 CP for defense work. To broaden the enrolled student amount EKA through elective course part allows students with lack of design skills choose extensive study course in the design basics so they can catch up with students which had design background in previous education level. These requirements are fulfilling state regulations for Academic study programme. (Annex 23)

2.2.2.

In the case of a master's study programme, the awarding of a degree is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant field of science or artistic creation and it is not known.

According to SAR "The master study programme "Brand design" has been created based on the development priorities determined in the EKA development strategy 2023. According to certain priorities and the Education Programme Development Plan 2019-2023 (which is part of the EKA development strategy) it is planned to increase the number of master study programmes, including increasing the number of study programmes that are implemented in a foreign language, as well as to promote the increase in the number of students. The "Brand Design" study programme will be implemented in Latvian and English, thus creating an opportunity to attract foreign students".

2.2.3.

The study implementation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. There is planned student-centred learning and teaching principles are considered.

The study programme will be implemented using the "blended learning" method, when part of the classes will be held remotely online, using the possibilities of EKA's e-environment. Such an approach is in line with industry trends related to the digitization of education and the development of digital skills.

2.2.4.

N/A

2.2.5.

N/A

2.2.6.

Study programme does not have graduates to evaluate this point.

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

Study programme is good in the interdisciplinary aspect but there is no necessary depth in the brand design and in study programme are missing such important aspects for brand design as marketing psychology, integrated marketing communications etc. From site interviews experts conclude that study programme is oriented more towards the management of design not the brand it self.

The study implementation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme and student-centred learning and teaching principles are considered. EKA claims that all teaching staff members involved into supervision of final thesis and making the study courses are bringing the latest trends into the study process.

Strengths:

- 1) An approach to the inclusion of interdisciplinarity in the study process.
- 2) The study implementation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme and there is planned student-centred learning and teaching principles are considered.

Weaknesses:

- 1) In the context of brand design, such important elements as advertising psychology, integrated marketing communication, and public relations are missing.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There has been no chance for experts to actually check how the latest research trends and achievements in the field of design are being included into the defence work, because study programme still does not have graduates. Based on EKA's claims such achievements and findings are being implemented into student research works for their Masters thesis. This is brand new study programme and nor EKA, nor Experts at the moment can provide evidence for this point to be not applicable.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

The study provision for the implementation of the study programme is equipped and designed to meet requirements, ensuring an environment for achieving the intended learning outcomes. The facilities include specialised premises tailored to the study direction's needs, along with common areas shared with other directions. For example: The Digital Design Laboratory features computers, software, an interactive projector, and a 3D printer; A drawing room; computer class equipped with specialised software for design planning; workshop for practical work with exhibition space. Common areas are available for broader use and include lecture rooms, a business incubator room, a cafe, recreational spaces for students, Students' Council rooms, lecturers' rooms, a conference room, a library, and a creative hall. The university ensures Wi-Fi connectivity throughout its premises, and all lecture rooms are equipped with necessary material and technical resources such as computers and projectors. Moreover, the study process benefits from an e-environment, including the EKA website, EKA application, Moodle, and BigBlue Button. These digital tools streamline access to class schedules, announcements, study data, and financial information, enhancing the overall learning experience. Students have access to the EKA library, which is supplemented with the latest literature, ensuring relevance within a five-year timeframe. Funding for book acquisitions is planned from the university's annual budget, typically allocated at 2-3% annually based on book depreciation and faculty demands for the latest literature. The teaching staff actively participates in maintaining

the library's relevance by informing librarians of required literature updates. In summary, the comprehensive material and technical provisions, as well as the financial support for library resources, align with the study program's needs, contributing to achieve desired learning outcomes.

2.3.2.

N/A

2.3.3.

Study programme do not have state funded places, so all of the resources available come directly from the tuition fees of the students. Some additional funds that EKA have obtained are used to modernise for example infrastructure, but that influences more than one study programme. EKA has determined that for the study programme to be rentable they need at least 25 students in total for regardless of the study language. Expenses for one student have been set to 3052,04 EUR. The current tuition fee is set at 3300 EUR which fully covers expenses. (SAR section 3.3.3. p.107) EKA have indicated that they plan to raise tuition fee to at least 3600 EUR per academic year. Such an approach can ensure rentability of study programme and also provide resources for the development in the future. In the academic year 2022/2023 there were only 7 students, 3 studying in Latvian and 4 in English flow, this fact can not be an issue since the study programme is brand new and the study programme doesn't have graduates. Therefore experts concluded that more time is needed to evaluate study programme financial stability. During the site interview study programme director indicated that expenses for English and Latvian implementation types are the same. Also usually English implementation and work with international students is harder for not native speakers hence can be rewarded more. EKA could make international study programmes a little bit more expensive since tuition fees can still be considered as competitive.

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

The study programme is well-equipped to achieve its learning goals with specialized facilities and common areas. Specialized rooms, like the Digital Design Laboratory, cater to program-specific needs, while common areas provide essential resources. The university offers Wi-Fi and equips lecture rooms with necessary technology. An e-environment streamlines access to schedules and study materials. Funding for the program relies on tuition fees, which currently cover expenses. Plans to raise fees to 3600 EUR will ensure sustainability and development. The programme had a small enrollment due to its newness, and financial stability will be assessed over time. Expenses are similar for English and Latvian implementations, but higher fees for international students may be considered to remain competitive.

Strengths:

1) Available infrastructure for study programme implementation is sufficient to reach study programme goals.

Weaknesses:

1) Since the study programme is new, currently the programme is not profitable due to lack of students.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Students have access to facilities, materials, technologies and teaching staff that is qualified to lead students towards achieving study programme goals. Currently study programme is not viable due to low amount of students, EKA is aware of the risk that study programme is not viable and this is acceptable since study programme is brand new and don't have graduates. It takes time to attract students for new programmes and experts don't consider this reason sufficient enough to decrease evaluation of the study programme.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

The teaching staff members responsible for implementing the study programme fail to meet the necessary qualifications and expertise required for the field of Design and Brand Design, as evidenced by the document "28_Annex_Professors_BD." This issue extends also to Game Design study programme, as the same set of names is utilised for both programmes. Consequently, the university does not adhere to the requirements outlined in "Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause three of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education." but in reality the staff indicated is not fully aligned with the study programme specifics. Furthermore, a portion of the teaching staff operates on short-term contracts, potentially leading to future complications within the study programme due to their inability to ensure long-term continuity. This situation raises concerns about the program's capacity to achieve its intended goals and learning outcomes effectively in long term. EKA also in SAR section 3.4.1. P.108 mentioned that the teaching staff members associated with the study courses in the study programme possess a combination of academic and professional experience bringing in interdisciplinarity to the curriculum. They bring expertise from various domains, including management science, marketing, and design, which aligns with the program's interdisciplinary nature. Experts are worried that the management part in the curriculum may take over the brand design part and this raises questions about study programme name and belonging to the study field of arts.

2.4.2.

The university is committed to upholding the quality of the study programme "Brand Design" and ensuring its compliance with regulatory requirements. To this end, the qualifications of the teaching staff involved in the programme align with the stipulated regulatory acts and support the strategic objectives of the EKA University of Applied Sciences. With a total of 17 instructors engaged in programme implementation, 59% of them, or 10 individuals, serve as the mainstay for the programme, showcasing a strong institutional commitment to ensure Masters level programme. Moreover, the teaching staff boasts a robust academic background, with 10 holding doctorate degrees and 7 possessing master's degrees, including 6 professors and associate professors. However, it is worth noting that 41% of the teaching staff comprises guest lecturers, which raises concerns about their transient status.

2.4.3.

N/A

2.4.4.

Based on CV's of the EKA staff members involved in the implementation of Brand design experts found out that five of the recruited faculty members have no publications but have professional experience, and some of them are recruited as guest lecturers. For other teaching staff, the number of publications is adequate and sufficient. It demonstrates that publication and artistic creativity is a part of the staff members' everyday duties in EKA.

2.4.5.

The study programme has established a mechanism to foster collaboration among the teaching staff, ensuring the attainment of the program's objectives and facilitating the seamless integration

of study courses within the curriculum. Firstly, teaching staff members work together in crafting detailed study course descriptions and developing e-courses within the digital learning environment, such an approach was mentioned during the interviews with staff members. When multiple instructors are involved in teaching a single course for different student groups, they coordinate the course content, learning requirements, recommended reading materials, and independent study guidelines, while also managing the distribution of resources within the e-environment. To encourage and enhance collaboration, the university organises qualification improvement events, international gatherings, and informal networking opportunities for the teaching staff to work on shared tasks. On the other hand, some of such cooperation especially in regards of changing study programme curriculum or updating it are based on personal (informal) communication, so it is hard to follow reasons for bringing changes in the study programme. Currently EKA has not identified any changes, since the programme is new.

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

The study programme demonstrates a commitment to fostering collaboration among teaching staff, promoting the achievement of programme objectives, and facilitating the seamless integration of study courses. This cooperative approach includes crafting detailed course descriptions and developing e-courses within a digital learning environment, where instructors coordinate course content, learning requirements, and resource distribution. While some collaboration relies on personal, informal communication, the university also organizes qualification improvement events, international gatherings, and networking opportunities to enhance teamwork. However, concerns arise regarding the program's ability to adapt and implement changes effectively, given the newness of the curriculum and the informal communication channels. Regarding the qualifications of the teaching staff in the "Brand Design" programme, experts found that while some faculty members lack publications, they possess professional experience. Still, concerns arise over the transient status of guest lecturers. While the teaching staff encompasses diverse expertise from fields like management science, marketing, and design, experts are concerned that the management component may overshadow the brand design aspect, raising questions about programme naming and its affiliation with the arts.

Strengths:

1) For the teaching staff the number of publications is adequate.

Weaknesses:

1) Five of the recruited faculty members have no publications, they have only professional experience in the field. But this is not approach to continue to ensure academic and artistic research integrity in the programme.

2) Professors indicated for implementation of academic study programme are not closely related to the industry.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Large proportion of staff members are only as guest lecturers undermining study programme continuity. Also there are some staff members with only experience in the field, without research

activity, which can cause problems to ensure field related research activities. Professors indicated for the implementation of the programme are not closely related to the field.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard Cabinet of Ministers No. 240. Study programme is 2 years (full time) long awarding 80 CP covering mandatory and elective part study courses. Experts would recommend to carefully review and describe in the internal guidelines how the first article, paragraph 8 of Law on Higher Education Institutions is(will be) applied, especially this part: Credit points are expressed in whole numbers. One credit point corresponds to 25-30 hours of study work See annex 23.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study course descriptions and the study materials have been prepared in Latvian and English languages and comply with the requirements set in Law on Higher Education Institutions. See annex 26. Experts team would advise to renew all literature that is older than 10 years, but this is not important enough to decrease criteria as partially compliant.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma provided to experts that is being issued for the completion of the study programme complies with the procedure how state recognised documents of higher education are issued in accordance to Cabinet of Ministers No.202.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The university has provided confirmation that academic staff of the Master study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Annex 28.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Rector of university has signed document (annex 11.) that the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language (Latvian) in accordance with the regulations and can perform professional duties and office duties.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Rector of university has signed document (annex 11.) that the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2 level proficiency in English language in accordance with the regulations and can perform professional duties and office duties.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement according to the Cabinet of Ministers No. 70.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

University has provided several cooperation agreements (see annex 5) with Daugavpils University, University of Business, Arts and Technology "RISEBA" and Baltics International Academy that confirms that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. Students will be transferred to

Professional Master study programme "Arts"; Master study programme "New media and audiovisual art"; Professional Master study programme "Design" accordingly to the list.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The higher education institution has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme. Annex 6.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

EKA should create internal procedure for re-calculating CP amount based on the latest version of Law on Higher Education Institutions. This does not influence overall assessment of the criteria.

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

The study programme is found to be relevant to the field of art and complies with regulatory requirements. It emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach, combining art, management, and technology to produce multifunctional specialists in brand design. However, concerns arise due to the program's newness, specifically related to communication with students and curriculum feedback. There is a perceived lack of depth in brand design knowledge, and some experts feel the programme leans more toward design management than brand design itself. Despite these concerns, the study program employs effective teaching methods, has adequate facilities, and relies on tuition fees for financial sustainability, with plans to increase fees for program development and competitiveness, although the small initial enrollment requires further assessment of financial stability.

Strengths:

- 1) The study programme aligns with regulatory requirements, ensuring it meets the necessary standards for education in the field of art. At the same time it is hard to tell how close the thesis works will be to the trends in the field.
- 2) The program's interdisciplinary nature, combining art, management, and technology, allows

students to become versatile specialists in brand design, reflecting contemporary educational guidelines and the vision of organizations like OECD.

Weaknesses:

1) While the programme excels in interdisciplinary aspects, it lacks depth in specific areas crucial to brand design, such as marketing psychology and integrated marketing communications. This could limit graduates' readiness for specialized roles in the field.

2) Focus on Design Management: Site interviews suggest the programme leans more toward design management than brand design itself, potentially undermining the program's core focus. This could affect its ability to produce brand design specialists.

Evaluation of the study programme "Brand Design"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Brand Design"

Short-term recommendations

1) EKA management should proactively engage with faculty and students during the initial implementation years of the study program (each semester). This can be achieved through regular feedback sessions, surveys, and open forums to gather insights and make necessary adjustments to the program in real-time.

Long-term recommendations

1) To enhance the comprehensiveness of the brand design program and its relevance to the study programme name, EKA should consider incorporating elements such as advertising psychology, integrated marketing communication, and public relations into the curriculum. This can be achieved by collaborating with industry experts and reviewing similar successful programs to identify key components.

2) In order to address the current lack of profitability due to low student enrollment, EKA should explore marketing and recruitment strategies to attract more students to the programme. This may involve targeted advertising, scholarships, or partnerships with relevant organizations to increase awareness and interest in the programme.

3) To ensure academic and artistic research integrity, EKA should encourage faculty members to engage in research and publication activities. This can be facilitated by providing incentives for research, offering resources and support for publication, and promoting a culture of scholarly inquiry within the institution.

4) To bridge the gap between academia and industry, EKA should actively seek out professors with relevant industry experience or consider establishing partnerships with industry professionals. This can provide students with valuable insights and connections to the industry, enhancing the program's practical relevance and job prospects for graduates.

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

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Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:		Partially compliant	EKA partly ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system and some improvements are necessary.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)		Partially compliant	Currently EKA is at the verge of transitioning to a more academic study profile in study field Art, compared to previous professionally oriented study programmes. The scientific evidence for academic research currently can be evaluated as poor and not always coherent with the study programmes in the study field. Artistic research is more sophisticated and established. They both need to be developed in tandem with each other.
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.		Partially compliant	The criteria for determining the reputation of cooperation partners are not defined and the criteria for partner selection are not clear.
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.	Fully compliant		The previous report has been sufficiently addressed.

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	Interior Design (42214)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Good
2	Computer Game Design (43214)	Not relevant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Average
3	Brand Design (45214)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Average

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

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