

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: University of Latvia

Study field: Psychology

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

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The academic bachelor's study programme (hereafter - ABSP) "Psychology" (full-time and part-time form), professional master's study programme (hereafter - PMSP) "Psychology" (full-time form) and doctoral study programme (hereafter - DSP) of the study field "Psychology" are implemented in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Declaration, the relevant laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia and the normative, strategic and development documents of the University of Latvia (hereafter - UL).

The previous accreditation of the study field "Psychology" was carried out in the 2019 academic year and the study field received a six-years accreditation term. The recommendations provided by the experts during the previous accreditation of the study field have been implemented in accordance with the plan approved by the Psychology Study Field Council. The implementation of these recommendations has contributed to enhancing the quality of education, research activities, and overall academic environment at UL.

The study field offers a well-structured academic pathway that aligns with national educational strategies and international standards. The study programmes collectively aim to prepare professionals and researchers with a solid theoretical foundation, practical experience, and critical scientific skills. The study field is characterized by its interdisciplinary approach, modern infrastructure, and active engagement with the labor market.

The ABSP provides a broad foundation in psychology, equipping students with fundamental skills for both professional and academic pursuits. It offers a wide range of courses, modernized teaching methods, and practical placements. However, the study programme experiences a dropout rate of 12-15% and an uneven distribution between compulsory and elective courses. The PMSP builds on the ABSP foundation, emphasizing practical work in various psychology subfields. Despite its strengths in work placements and stakeholder recognition, the study programme struggles with student overload, limited specializations beyond clinical psychology, and financial sustainability. The DSP focuses on intensive research, encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and international networking. It meets formal requirements and engages students in high-level research projects, yet financial challenges and insufficient internationalization remain problematic.

The study field benefits from modern research facilities, including a well-equipped Psychology Laboratory, access to international research databases, and practical training opportunities at the Psychological Help Centre. The faculty demonstrates strong leadership, supported by a culture of trust and open communication. However, financial sustainability poses a concern, particularly in the PMSP and DSP, which rely heavily on cross-financing from the ABSP. The lack of funding opportunities for PhD students often results in delayed thesis completions and limited research publications.

The internal quality assurance system is well-established, adhering to European Standards and Guidelines and supported by regular monitoring and stakeholder engagement. Nonetheless, the university should improve feedback mechanisms by ensuring that students receive information on how their feedback is utilized. Additionally, greater involvement of employers and graduates in study programme development would strengthen the study field's responsiveness to labor market needs.

International cooperation is recognized as a strategic priority, with collaborations established through projects like Erasmus+ and partnerships with institutions such as the University of Leuven. However, outgoing student mobility remains low, and international research partnerships require clearer strategic planning. The faculty's proficiency in English facilitates internationalization, but further efforts are needed to integrate international cooperation into long-term institutional goals.

The study field also shows significant progress in research activity, with increased participation in projects and publications. However, concerns persist regarding publications in low-quality open-access journals, which could affect the programme's academic reputation. Addressing this issue by promoting reputable, cost-free publication avenues is recommended.

The experts team can conclude that the UL psychology study field successfully prepares professionals and researchers for the labor market and academia through a well-rounded curriculum, strong practical training, and modern research facilities. To sustain and enhance its success, the faculty should prioritize financial sustainability, improve international cooperation, increase stakeholder engagement in quality assurance, and promote interest in less popular psychology subfields like educational and organizational psychology.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1.

According to the Self-Assessment Report (SAR section 2.1.1.) the aims and objectives of the study field "Psychology" are in accordance with the scope of activity of the University of Latvia, strategic development directions and objectives, development needs and development trends of the society and economy, which are determined by the Strategy of the University of Latvia for 2021-2027 (approved at the meeting of the Senate of the University of Latvia on 28 June 2021).

The objectives of the study field are also in line with several national policy planning documents, to name "Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia 2030" and "The Latvian National Development Plan 2021-2027 (approved by the Saeima on 2 February 2020).

Based on the strategy of the University of Latvia for 2021-2027, the objectives of the study field "Psychology" are:

- to promote the research activities of the faculty members involved in the study field, to develop cooperation with representatives of other social sciences and natural sciences, as well as to activate and improve the activities of the psychology laboratory.
- to improve the quality of study programmes and course content within the study field, to ensure the attraction of students, to expand and develop contacts with similar higher education programmes in Latvia and abroad, as well as to make the most of the student and faculty mobility programmes by promoting the participation of students and faculty in them.
- to contribute to public education in psychology science and its applications, and increase the involvement of faculty and students in applied research to address topical societal issues.
- to ensure the attraction, retention and development of quality academic staff.
- to contribute to the creation, maintaining and development of a modern, attractive and sustainable study, research and administrative environment.
- to promote the well-being of students and staff, to develop and strengthen a collaborative and

creative organisational culture.

The goals were developed in an engaging manner by involving all academic staff of the study field and are reviewed on a regular basis. The head of the study field and the head of the Department of Psychology manage and monitor the implementation of the development goals of the study field. For the upcoming review cycles it would be worth involving the student representatives from all levels of studies to bring students' perspectives and experiences into the plan.

Currently Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology (FESP) faculty building is located on Jurmalas Gatve, a suburb part of Riga city and is not yet part of the UL Academic center and campus in Torņakalns. It is expected that the Department of Psychology starts its work in the "House of Letters" of the UL Academic centre in 2026. On March 27, 2024 a new Rector of the UL started his work and subsequently there were changes in the whole management team and new ways of working introduced.

During the visit in the meeting with the dean of the faculty and vice-rector in scientific field it was observed by the experts that there is a gap between FESP psychology department management and newly elected university management in understanding the priorities and new ways of working which partially might be related to the physical location outside the academic center. At the same time investments into improving study and research infrastructure should be complemented.

The interconnection of the study programmes included in the study field is clear and logical. The study field includes an academic bachelor study programme in psychology, a professional master study programme in psychology, and a doctoral study programme in psychology. Graduates of the ABSP are prepared to continue their studies in the PMSP. The total duration of studies in the ABSP and PMSP for the Master's degree in psychology and the professional qualification of a psychologist is equivalent to five years of full-time study, which meets the requirements for the psychologist's qualification as defined by the European Union. Graduates of the PMSP are prepared to perform the professional duties of a psychologist under the supervision of a certified professional in accordance with the requirements of the Law on Psychologists. Graduates of the PMSP may continue their studies in the DSP. The aim of the DSP in Psychology is to train highly qualified scientists and academic staff in various branches of psychology (in the study directions of the programme - general/cognitive, clinical (including cognitive-behavioural psychotherapy), developmental, personality, social/ organisational psychology), enhancing their competences and skills in the organisation, management and implementation of academic research work. The DSP in psychology at the UL offers five different sub-fields. The doctoral students can do research as well in interdisciplinary field - Psychology and Educational management.

During expert meetings with the UL management and representatives of a doctoral school it was explained by the UL representatives that in July 2024 a University Doctoral school was established as a separate structure with an aim to build capacity in the new doctoral study model required by the Law. All doctoral study programmes will be run centrally including career development of the new scientists, quality monitoring and promotion of international cooperation. It will be implemented gradually by the end of year 2026 moving to doctoral studies with employment and strengthening interdisciplinarity of the studies. The SAR was not yet reflecting the new doctoral studies model and its implication on the ways of working at the Psychology department. It is expected that the doctoral student will receive a stable and solid remuneration during the whole study period. In July 2024 the UL established the new structure - Doctoral school which is not yet reflected in the SAR.

The psychology study field at the University of Latvia is unique in the Latvian market for the variety

of specialisation options offered, both in terms of practical qualification (Master's level) and scientific specialisation (Doctoral level). The PMSP at the UL offers four different areas of study, two of which - clinical and legal psychology - are offered only at the University of Latvia. According to the SAR, the UL considers that clinical and legal psychology are offered uniquely by the UL. But other higher education institutions (e.g. Riga Stradins University) offer clinical and health psychology study programmes at the master's level and Daugavpils University offers educational and school psychology specialisation. Work and organisational and legal psychology study programmes differentiate the UL from other Latvian higher educational institutions. During the meetings with the academic staff and students it was evident that there is a low interest and low promotion of other specialisation areas but clinical and health psychology.

According to the interviews with the selected employers during the expert visit, there is a great demand for psychologists in the labour market. Majority of the employers present in the meeting were employing graduates in clinical and health psychology and one in work and organisational psychology. There is a high satisfaction by the employers with the respect to the competences and skills of the graduates. It might be concluded that there is a great demand from educational institutions for school and educational psychologists but there is little promotion of the specialisation among the students.

1.1.2.

According to the SAR (SAR section 2.1.2.), SWOT analysis of the study field is performed. The SWOT analysis is sound, appropriate and realistic, identifying major internal and external impact aspects towards the challenges and possibilities of the study field. Among the strengths experience and qualification of teaching staff is mentioned, such as all elected academic staff have PhDs in psychology and successful renewal of the academic staff, good command of foreign language which is in line with the expert observations during the meetings with the staff. Key weaknesses, such as student and staff exchange and mobility opportunities, are identified and there is a plan to overcome them/improve them. Key threats such as funding and opportunities such as internationalisation are fixed as well and there is a plan for improvement in place.

There is a study field development plan for 2021 - 2027 provided in the SAR and matching UL strategic goals and development directions for 2021 - 2027. They are structured according to the six development direction goals and institutional development of the UL.

The development plan of the study field is elaborated by the head of the psychology field and approved by the academic staff at the general staff meeting of the department. It should be complimented that the development plan is formally approved and its implementation monitored at the meetings of Study Field Council which integrates as well representatives of the students and the employers.

One of the weaknesses identified "there are not enough standardized psychological assessment methods in Latvia for students to use in the teaching/ learning process". The planned activity is "systematic, step-by-step work to improve the arsenal of students in the method development process". It raises the questions as the overall standard and approach internationally is that private companies, test and assessment publishers, are working on the methods, not universities administering the psychological tests.

1.1.3.

The governance of the UL and responsibilities, duties, rights of the various decision-making, administrative and support structures are well-described in the SAR (SAR section 2.1.3.). The study

programme has a study programme director who directs the development and implementation of the study programme approved by the Senate of the UL and accountable for his work to the dean of the faculty. Each study programme has its director and each sub-programme has the head ensuring a well-functioning, sustainable operation of the programme in accordance with the UL procedures. The Director of study field organizes the work of study field councils, as well as organises annual reports and reviews. The study field council supervises academic, professional and doctoral study programmes. It is worth mentioning that the council incorporates the students from self-government, representatives of employers and graduates of the study field. The Study Programme Quality Assessment Commission includes as well a representative delegated by the student's council and the UL Alumni club. Study programme directors meet regularly with the representatives of the FESP Student Council to discuss and coordinate key issues related to the work and development of the Faculty and study programmes according to the SAR.

The governance structure of the study fields is in the line of the overall governance framework of the UL and FESP. The head of the Department of Psychology of FESP manages the day-to-day implementation of the study field in accordance with the instructions of the management of the UL, the strategy for the development of the study field, the decisions of the Faculty Council, the instructions of the dean and the collegial decisions of the staff meetings. It was noted by the experts that the current head of the Department of Psychology of FESP is on a temporary assignment until he fulfills the legal obligations of having a PhD degree. According to the SAR once a month staff meetings are held to discuss topical issues related to the implementation of the study field and to make decisions on the organisation of practical study and research work on a collegial basis. It was observed by experts during the visit at the department and interviews that there was no clarity among various heads and directors on their accountabilities and responsibilities. So this seems a developmental area for the management.

1.1.4.

According to the SAR (SAR section 2.1.4.) enrollment into the study field's programmes takes place in accordance with the "Admission Requirements at the UL". The admission requirements for study programmes are in conformity to the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, the UL internal regulations, as well the study programme goals and development goals psychology study field. Enrollment procedures are logical and effective. Enrolment in undergraduate studies is centralised through the Single Enrolment in Undergraduate Programmes System, which integrates the enrolment in 12 HEIs in Latvia.

The conditions for the evaluation criteria of the admission competition, the formulas for calculating the competition evaluation and the admission procedure are determined in the admission rules of the current academic year of the University of Latvia and published on the University of Latvia portal www.lu.lv/gribustudet. Enrolment in PMSP is decentralised, at each faculty, but with uniform deadlines. Enrolment is based on grades obtained during undergraduate studies. In study programmes that allow for prior education in various fields, the entrance examination is used to determine the correspondence of the candidate's prior knowledge to the field of the study programme.

For the master's level entrance examination includes an essay about study motivation, a test of English language (writing an abstract of a scientific article).

Admission in doctoral studies takes place centrally. The applicant must submit the topic of the promotion thesis and supervisor should be agreed upon. The applicant's eligibility is assessed by the doctoral council of the branch of science. The quality of the doctoral thesis application and the

ability to communicate in English on the topic of the planned doctoral research are assessed during the admissions interviews.

During the review period the UL Doctoral Council has changed the admission requirements for the DSP, giving the opportunity to admit qualified applicants without prior formal training in psychology to the study programme, while improving the entrance examinations to test applicants' knowledge and understanding of the principles of psychological science and research methodology. In the UL's eyes these changes will allow the study programme to broaden the pool of applicants, while diversifying the research areas and competences of the programme students, overall increasing the development potential, quality and sustainability of the study programme. In the eyes of the experts it is really a questionable practice not matching the practice of internationally recognized doctoral study programmes across Europe.

Study course recognition in undergraduate and postgraduate study programmes is conducted mainly when students return from international exchange programmes or resuming or continuing studies at later stages after changing or discontinuing studies started at the UL or other HEI. In certain cases, the recognition of professional experience is done in the study programmes by referencing knowledge, skills and competence acquired in the professional activity to the internship intended in the study programme, but there have been no such precedents in the PMSP. Offered opportunity by the UL to perform recognition of learning outcomes achieved through non-formal and extra-curricular education, including, continuing education programmes, is rarely used, and there have been no such precedents within the study field's programmes.

For the UL students, who study or undergo internship within the framework of various international exchange programmes, the recognition and referencing of learning outcomes achieved during mobility is carried out in accordance with the above-mentioned regulation and procedure regulating recognition at the UL, and the Procedure for Organising Erasmus+ Programme Mobility at the UL (the UL Order No1/363 of 18.12.2014). Since 2019, 15 Erasmus+ exchange students have been recognised in the ABSP "Psychology".

1.1.5.

The assessment system used complies with the internal regulations of the UL and relevant laws of Latvia. The assessment of knowledge during the semester is based on the assessment of tests and independent works. The total mark of the interim examinations is not less than 50% of the total mark of the course. Oral/ written examinations are used at the end of the course and account for no less than 10% of the total mark. Taking an examination is a mandatory requirement for obtaining credit points for the completion of a study course. There is a UL Centralised recording system for study course grading calculation. At the end of each study course there is final examination or defence (course work, final project, semester paper, field course, internship). The assessment is based on a 10-point system. The course is "passed" if the grade on the 10-point scale is not lower than 4. Learning outcomes are analysed by the academic staff. Student surveys are conducted on a regular basis. The UL has established the procedure for reviewing the obtained assessment.

The choice of methods are closely linked to the aims and objectives of the study programmes. Various and diverse pedagogical and assessment methods are used at different study levels. It was noted that practitioners, professionals from different institutions are invited to lecture on specific subjects in the courses in order to promote the unity of theory and practice. At the master's study programme the practical sessions focus on both training the student's practical skills for psychologist's work (through role-plays, supervision, practical work recordings) and on self-experience and fostering emotional maturity (through self-reflection, participation in personal

experience groups and individual tasks). At the doctoral study programme there is a practice that senior students are involved in the supervision of junior students (undergraduate, peer teaching-learning). As observed by the experts doctoral students mostly are working in silos.

1.1.6.

The UL has the Academic Ethics Code and principles of fair and responsible conduct are stipulated. There is a procedure developed for verifying the originality of text using similarity detection tools, such as the Turnitin and the Unified Computerised Plagiarism Control System compliant to the Regulations for Academic Integrity at the UL. The UL is the developer of this system and provides other HEIs with the opportunity to use it. In December 2022 the UL has concluded an agreement with Turnitin LLC for the implementation and use of the anti-plagiarism tool for the needs of the UL ensuring more functionalities, namely, the possibility to integrate the text originality tool into the e-study platform and provide access to the tool for academic staff to verify the originality of regular study papers.

According to the SAR (section 2.1.6.), plagiarism in the final thesis of psychology students is extremely rare. During the accreditation period two cases were detected. During the academic staff and expert meeting it was noted that the anti-plagiarism tools are used by the staff but the experts would suggest using also other tools than Turnitin.

The UL position on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) was not reflected in the SAR but the experts found “Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence” published on the website of the UL (<https://www.lu.lv/en/studies/study-process/artificial-intelligence-in-ul/>). The Guidelines aim to help employees and students to orient themselves to the opportunities provided by the generative AI and to be aware of the risks connected to their use. Teaching staff of the UL can permit or prohibit the use of AI tools in their study course. The use of AI tools depends on the intended goals and study results of each study course. The guidelines are published in Latvian and English.

It was observed by the experts that scientific articles are published in some questionable and shady online open access platforms such as Frontiers for free with low quality reviews. One doctoral student during the site visit mentioned a very high fee paid for the article by personal financial means of publication.

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

The aims and objectives of the study field are rooted into the strategies of the UL and national planning documents. The interconnection of the study programmes included in the study field is clear and logical. SWOT analysis performed is sound and realistic. The development plan is in place and it is made in an engaging way with a variety of stakeholders and monitored on a regular basis.

Overall there is adequate and efficient management and support structure in place of the implementation and development of the study field’s programmes, management is motivated towards study field development and various stakeholders are involved in the study programme development. The assessment system used complies with the internal regulations of the UL and relevant laws of Latvia. The UL has established the principles of academic integrity and mechanisms for their observance, effective anti-plagiarism tools in place are effective. Enrollment into the study field’s programmes takes place in accordance with the “Admission Requirements at the UL”. The admission requirements for study programmes are in conformity to the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, the UL internal regulations, as well the study programme goals and psychology study field’s development goals. Enrollment procedures are logical and effective.

Strengths:

- 1) There is a high demand for the graduates of the study field in the labour market and high satisfaction of employers on the competences and skills of the graduates.
- 2) The Study field council includes representatives of employers, students and graduates. The Faculty Council includes the student representative.
- 3) Academic integrity in the UL is defined as one of its strategic values, and the principles of academic integrity have been established and published in Latvian and English.
- 4) The anti-plagiarism tools are in place for the staff and student use.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Promotion of other specialisation fields of psychology is lacking, such as educational and school psychology or work and organisational psychology differentiating the UL from other HEIs.
- 2) The UL is administering psychological assessments and tests itself, not giving the right to the private sector test publishers.
- 3) The accountabilities and responsibilities for the various study programme heads and directors are described and defined de jure in the papers, but in practice staff members had no clarity on exact responsibilities and were referring to each other.
- 4) There is a risk that publishing scientific articles in questionable open-access platforms with high fees might undermine academic integrity by prioritizing quantity over quality, compromising peer review standards, and diminishing the credibility and impact of research.
- 5) Using only the Turnitin tool without considering others.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1.

The UL has developed a regulated quality assurance (hereinafter – QA) system to plan and monitor QA across its structure, including the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology. This system is based on University of Latvia Development Plan for the Study Process 2030, the University of Latvia Scientific Activity Development Plan 2030, and the University of Latvia Strategy for 2021-2027 as well as the external regulatory enactments established in the Republic of Latvia and in accordance with the comprehensive quality management approach, using the model of excellence developed by EFQM 2020 and elements of the ISO 9001:2015 standard, as well as integrating Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (hereinafter - ESG) 2015 (SAR Annex V15_ENG_LU_QMS_Manual.pdf, p. 4., 31).

Quality assessment and its management is described in the Quality Management Handbook (version 15) 2024 (herein after – QMH) (SAR, p. 14). The QMH is approved by Order of the UL Rector and is based on ESG and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model, providing clear structure and alignment with these crucial QA frameworks. The UL quality management system is implemented in accordance with the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), by integrating the excellence-oriented approach into the corporate culture of the UL (SAR, p. 13).

In UL, the Head of Administration is responsible for the establishment and operation of a quality management system, while the UL Quality Manager implements, maintains and improves it on the operational level, including participating at the UL Quality Advisory Committee. The administration of various units (faculties, institutes, agencies, etc., and their respective deans, directors) is responsible for ensuring quality management within their units, according to the UL's regulations. The responsibilities for quality management and assurance are described for each employee and

student. (SAR Annex V15_ENG_LU_QMS_Manual.pdf, p. 36) The involvement of each UL employee in quality management is ensured by their direct administrator through horizontal communication and individually tailored management of the employee's development. Each UL student's involvement in quality management is coordinated by the study programme director in accordance with the procedures specified in the UL regulatory acts, including their participation in surveys organized by the UL in accordance with the Procedures for the organization of the regular surveys for evaluating the study process at the University of Latvia. (SAR Annex V15_ENG_LU_QMS_Manual.pdf, p. 37) Moreover, student involvement in the QA on administrative and decision-making bodies is coordinated by the Student Council and is regulated by various UL's by-laws and specified in the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia (SAR Annex V15_ENG_LU_QMS_Manual.pdf, p. 37). Responsibilities for ensuring the quality of studies are divided between the Vice-Rector for studies, Study department, Study Programme Quality Assessment Board, professors, Study Programme Director, Head of the Study Field, Study Field Council, Dean of the Faculty, and Faculty Council.

UL has developed a well-structured, clearly hierarchical and thorough QA and Quality policy and Quality Action Policy that describes the procedures and responsibilities of various stakeholders involved in the operations of the UL. (SAR, p. 13.) During on-site visits, the experts received confirmation from administration, academic staff, students, and partially from employers that the system is implemented and monitored throughout the UL. While the system is based on the participation of various stakeholders that are precisely defined (SAR Annex V15_ENG_LU_QMS_Manual.pdf, table 3.8, p. 93), on-site visit indicated that the involvement of employers could be improved (explained below in Criterion 1.2.4. of this report).

Overall, the system is designed for continuous improvements and regular monitoring under the strategic plans and development vision of the UL and ESG for quality assurance (e.g., regular feedback surveys of various kind, annual review of the quality assessment and improvement system of study fields and study programmes, annual assessment of the QMS, regular meetings and focus groups with various stakeholders).

In experts' opinion, the efficiency of the system can be validated by the satisfaction shown in the feedback from the administration, students, academic staff and graduates on the on-site visits. On-site visit showed that students and academic staff feel heard, can freely share their feedback and suggest improvement regarding QA. However, it was also noted that the UL generally does not collect data on meetings where the results of the surveys are discussed, for example, responsible for the QA system could not answer the question of how many feedback sessions the directors of study programmes have organized with students and how many students have participated in them. It is important that all parties are involved in assessing the QA system and that it is fully monitored. It was also noted that QMH is not publicly available on UL's website. It is advised to improve the transparency and clarity of the QA system and management within UL by publishing the QMH on UL's website as an integral part of the daily operations of UL. Given how well UL has structured its QMH in accordance with ESG and EFQM, this handbook can serve as an example of good practice for other institutions in Latvia as well.

1.2.2.

The procedures for the development and review of the relevant study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms are regulated by UL's QA and management system. In addition, the development of new study programmes is regulated by the Regulation of Study Programmes of the University of Latvia (the UL Senate Decision No 2-3/13 of 26.02.2024.), and the review of study programmes is regulated by the procedure established in the UL Procedure for Preparation of Annual

Study Field Reports (Available only in Latvian) (SAR, p. 47). The quality management of the study field and its study programmes follows the Plan-Do-Check-Act (Deming) cycle, ensuring continuous development and improvement over a six-year period. This process involves setting goals and objectives that cascade down to each study programme, while regularly monitoring stakeholder requirements to support effective planning and address needs and priorities. The approach aligns with the UL Strategy 2021–2027, incorporating national and international sectoral policies, industry trends, and the impact of global environmental factors on the University's activities, including its study programmes (SAR, p. 46).

The course of regular surveys organized for the evaluation of studies, the procedure for analyzing and using their results at the UL, as well as the description of the types of surveys, their purposes, and target groups, is regulated by the Regulation on The Procedure of Regular Surveys for The Evaluation of Studies at The University of Latvia 2024 (hereinafter – Regulation). The Regulation describes the procedure of regular surveying of various stakeholders for continuous improvements, including the study field and corresponding study programmes. Different surveys are conducted to gather feedback from students, such as: survey on study courses and the work of the teaching staff; survey at the beginning of the studies; survey of the first study year's students on their study experience; survey of the final study year's students on their study experience and survey for doctoral students and residency students; survey for exchange students to collect the student experience and survey on termination of studies (Regulation, p. 2). The graduates who graduated from the UL in the previous year receive an alumni survey to find out information about graduates' professional activities and further life courses, as well as to find out the opinion of graduates about the education they received at the UL (Regulation, p. 5). Employers receive a survey once every 3 years to find out the opinion of employers about the conformity of the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired by the graduates of the UL with the requirements of the labour market, as well as to obtain proposals for improving the quality of studies (Regulation, p. 6). Survey data is more analyzed in Criterion 2.1.4. of this report.

The results of the surveys are analyzed as summaries and have limited access, according to the type of the survey. The summaries are fully available to the study programme director, the dean, the rector, vice-rector and by signing a declaration of non-disclosure of limited access (confidential) information to the chairman of the UL Student council (UL SC) and the head of the Academic Direction of the UL SC for all study programmes. Study programme director's task is to organize meetings with the students, where student survey results can be discussed. On the on-site visits academic staff and students clearly stated that they know where to find these surveys and they have these meetings with the programme director organized. However, from experts' point of view, the transparency of these data still can be improved by giving every party the possibility to see the survey results individually, as now it depends on the programme directors to give clear feedback afterward. Additionally, information regarding the provision of feedback is not publicly available, therefore, there is a lack of communication and mechanisms to involve a wider range of stakeholders, not only students with already established collaborations, to be involved in the QA of the study field and UL in general. During the on-site visit, employer representatives indicated that they would like to be more involved in providing feedback and evaluation about the study programmes and study field quality, indicating that currently communication is only focused on organizing internships.

On the administration level, the Academic Department conducts study courses and teaching staff assessment monitoring twice a year after the end of each study semester, paying special attention to exceptionally good ratings (7/7) and ratings that need improvement ($\leq 5,75$ out of 7). The results are analyzed by the dean, the study field director, and the study programme director. The study

field director then creates an action plan for improvements to the studies. Deans of faculties, heads of departments, and/or study programme directors organize meetings with the teaching staff and student self-governments of faculties at least once per year to discuss the results. The results of the survey on study courses and teaching staff's work are used in the process of election and re-election of academic staff (Regulation, p. 8).

Overall, the procedures for the development and review of the relevant study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms (including feedback to students, employers, and graduates) have been defined and they are logical, efficient, and available for all stakeholders. However, it is advised to develop a more active feedback system for employers, as well as, collect feedback from graduates more than once after graduation as their perspective about the studies can differ after a various time working in the field. Moreover, data collection activities about feedback on students' feedback should be implemented in the UL QA system, by ensuring that an overview of the feedback from surveys are available to all students and they participate in action plan development.

1.2.3.

As previously described (see criterion 1.2.2. of this report) students need to participate in semestral surveys giving their individual feedback about their teaching staff and study quality. On the on-site visit all level students were well informed about these surveys and meetings organized, as well as how they can individually give feedback, if necessary. Additionally, students pointed out that they have not had any conflict regarding not being able to give feedback or not being heard after giving it.

In case there are complaints and suggestions that need to be given otherwise and there is a disagreement between a teaching staff member and a student, there is a procedure for resolving it, which is described in the "Regulations on the Submission and Consideration of Student Proposals and Complaints at the University of Latvia" (SAR, p. 113). This regulation describes the steps and rules of submitting and evaluating the complaints/suggestions and the responsible persons through all the processes. The procedure is not anonymous and is strictly regulated in order to be registered in the documentation system. Perhaps it can be the reason why students and employees prefer to solve the issues providing direct feedback to the administration who then solves the problem promptly as stated during the on-site visit. This indicates signs of a positive culture and climate where mutual trust, collaboration and respect are present. However, this system can be viewed as a barrier to thorough quality assessment and analysis on the managerial level due to a lack of data collection - if the majority of issues are solved via direct communication, it might suggest a lack of structured reporting for statistical data and proper overview of the daily operations within the faculty.

Overall, the mechanism developed for submission of student complaints and suggestions is effective, promotes the implementation of improvements, students are informed about such opportunities and receive feedback. Students indicate satisfaction with their studies and emphasize the unimportance and quick problem-solving of the irregular issues that do occur (on-site visit). There are few mechanisms developed for how students can give feedback, including, regular surveys, direct communication and official proposal submission, as well as, students on the on-site visit stated that they trust the faculty student council, which also helps with improvements, if necessary.

1.2.4.

The UL collects data through various types of surveys more described under Criterion 1.2.2. Each semester UL conducts student surveys assessing the study course quality and teaching staff.

Students receive various other surveys as well throughout their study cycle to monitor and improve their study experience. Graduates receive a survey only once after graduation to evaluate their satisfaction with their studies, while employers receive a survey once every three years to evaluate the study quality through their experience with UL's graduates. During the on-site visit, students, academic staff and graduates stated that they have participated in data collection mechanisms. However, regarding employers, it was stated that employers would like to be more involved in quality assurance evaluation and feedback provision activities. Some employers are involved in the student's qualification work assessment and the majority of employers approve regular communication with faculty members to provide feedback regarding students' internships, however, they do not participate in providing feedback on the improvement of the study field. Overall, during the on-site meetings, the efficiency of the QA system was clearly assured. Most of the meetings approved the great importance and connection between students and the study programme directors. Yet the collection of data regarding student complaints and suggestions might have some shortcomings, as described under criteria 1.2.3. of this report.

To control, analyze and forecast the dynamics of the number of students, the UL collects data on: characterising number of applicants and matriculated students and their profile and number of students, broken down by faculties, study programmes, study levels, study years (SAR p. 51). To control the progress of student's studies and the implementation of the study programmes, the UL collects data on: interim assessment and final examination of student's study courses, completion of the study programme, students' academic debts in credit points and fulfilment of the tuition fee schedule provided in the student agreement (SAR p. 52). To obtain information for planning and efficient use of study resources, the following statistical information is collected in connection with study programmes: financing of study places and the number of student scholarship recipients and the number of study and student loans (SAR p. 53).

To summarize, the statistical data collection mechanism established by UL is efficient, ensures regular collection and analysis of information (statistics) on the study programmes corresponding to the study field. The mechanism for obtaining and providing feedback, including from students, graduates and employers, is effective and focused on the improvement of the study field. However, it is recommended to involve employers more in all mentioned processes, as indicated during on-site visit.

1.2.5.

On the UL website applicants are provided with general information regarding a description of the study programme, admission requirements, the degree to be obtained, study funding, and tuition fee. Furthermore, it is also possible to see the full description of the study programme, including the place and time of studies, study programme's annotation, goal and objectives, results, employment opportunities after graduation, contact information, study plan, and study courses with links to each study course description, where it is possible to see the study materials and literature. However, at the same time, there is a lack of information on the study organization (percentage of online courses, weekdays/weekends/evenings, etc.), study content by semesters, teaching staff, and the page is not interlinked directly to the application page and information regarding scholarships and study fee discounts, if applicable. All these components are important for the potential applicant during the decision-making process regarding their potential studies.

Overall, the information published on the website of the UL about the psychology study field study programmes corresponds to the information available in the official registers (VIIS and E-platform), providing applicants and students with important information published in all languages - both Latvian and English - of implementation of the study programme. On VIIS and E-platform, there is

information about all three study programmes. However, it is recommended to improve the information on the website of the UL, including more details for study process organization, information about academic staff, and possibilities for students to get scholarships.

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

The UL has developed and maintains a quality assurance system, based on internal strategies and development plans, ESG, EFQM, and legislation of Latvia which contributes to achieving the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes. The system ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes. The system could serve as an example of good practice and thus is encouraged to be made public to various stakeholders. The procedures for the development and review of the relevant study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms (including feedback to students, academic staff, employers, and graduates) have been defined, yet improvements should be made to increase transparency and communication with employers. The involvement of graduates in the quality assessment could be improved as well. The statistical data collection mechanism established by UL ensures regular collection and analysis of information (statistics) on the study programmes corresponding to the study field, yet data on student complaints and suggestions daily might be missing, since students prefer to solve problems unofficially via direct communication with the academic staff or administration. That also indicates a culture of mutual trust and respect that was absorbed during multiple meetings at the on-site visits and can be seen as an indicator of great management throughout the faculty. The information regarding study programmes published on the website corresponds to the information available in the official registers (VIIS and E-platform), however, it needs improvements to provide applicants and students with more detailed information regarding study content and organization.

Strengths:

- 1) The Quality Assurance System is based on the ESG and the EFQM Excellence Model, and is interlinked with various strategic development documents of UL, thus ensuring a well-developed system for continuous quality assurance through every entity in the institution.
- 2) Students, graduates, and employers overall are satisfied with the quality of studies and employment opportunities after studies.
- 3) Great leadership throughout the faculty based on a culture of excellence, mutual trust, support and respect.
- 4) There are several mechanisms developed for how students can give feedback, including, regular surveys, direct communication and official proposal submission, as well as, students trust the faculty student council, which also helps with improvements, if necessary.

Weaknesses:

- 1) There is a shortcoming in stakeholder engagement in the quality assurance of UL operations, particularly regarding the involvement of employers and graduates. Employer representatives indicated that they would like to be more involved in providing feedback and evaluation about the study programmes and study field quality. Currently, communication with employers is largely limited to organizing internships, rather than engaging them in a broader capacity regarding programme quality.
- 2) It is not monitored whether students receive feedback on the implementation of their feedback in the regular surveys. UL generally does not collect data on meetings where the results of the surveys are discussed.
- 3) The information about study programmes published on the UL website lacks important, student centred information regarding study content and organization of studies.

Assessment of the requirement [1]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Quality Assurance System and continuous improvement procedures are described in the Quality Management Handbook. The efficiency of the system was confirmed during the on-site visits via multiple representatives from the managerial structures of UL.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The UL has developed a regulated quality assurance system to plan and monitor QA across its structure, including the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology. The QA system and procedures are well written in the Quality Management Handbook, Quality Policy and Quality Action Policy (SAR pp. 13-14).

- 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

The mechanism is regulated in the by-laws of the UL, described in Regulation of Study Programmes and Regulations on the University of Latvia Study Field Management (SAR pp. 46-47).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The procedure is described in the Quality Management Handbook, pp. 48-50, and is verified by the section "Study procedures and organization" on the UL website. The study course descriptions and more detailed information is publicly available in the Course Catalogue on UL website.

- 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

The procedures are described in the Quality Management Handbook, pp. 34, 54-56, 60-65, 67-69; in the UL HR Management Policy; the Regulations on Academic and Administrative Positions at the UL (See SAR Annex V15_ENG_LU_QMS_Manual.pdf and SAR p. 71). The quality assurance of the academic staff is under the supervision of the Vice-Rectors.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The UL collects the mentioned data as described in SAR, pp. 51-54 and as summarized in this report, Section I criteria 1.2.4.

- 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

The Quality Assurance System and continuous improvement procedures are implemented and described in the Quality Management Handbook (See SAR Annex - V15_ENG_LU_QMS_Manual.pdf).

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1.

The SAR (pp. 57-59) details the financial framework, laws, regulations, and internal procedures guiding financial allocation. The methodology for calculating the prime cost of each study programme ensures transparency in financial planning. Revenue sources (state budget subsidy, tuition fees, lifelong learning, and research funding) are explicitly identified. Faculties independently manage their budgets while ensuring operational financial management. Faculty deans and executive directors are responsible for financial oversight, ensuring a structured approach to financial governance.

The SAR (p. 58) states that research funding comes from two primary sources – base funding for scientific activity and national/international project funding. Indirect research funding supports study programme implementation through faculty infrastructure maintenance, academic staff development, and research-based teaching. As shown in SAR table 3.4.4.1, faculty members actively participate in international projects and scientific activities, which indirectly benefit the study process by integrating research into teaching. A system for funding scientific research is clear, implemented and effective. In terms of the involvement of the academic staff in research projects, there is a positive dynamic in the number of projects, the amount of funding and the diversity of research topics. Both the number of projects and the amount of funding have increased significantly compared to the previous assessment period.

While UL has a financial redistribution mechanism in place, the profitability of study programmes is uneven: BSP full-time: 2% profit, BSP part-time: 24% profit, MSP: -12% loss, DSP: -53% loss. As was discussed during the meeting with the directors of the study programmes, the faculty plans to cover losses from profitable study programmes and additional revenue sources (lifelong learning, other services, and accumulated resources). While this strategy ensures short-term financial stability, the long-term sustainability of underperforming programmes (particularly the DSP and MSP) is uncertain. It is unclear whether this model will be effective in maintaining long-term financial viability without structural adjustments.

The presence of the Study Quality Improvement Fund ensures additional financial support for study programme development, mitigating some financial risks.

1.3.2.

The UL has established a well-equipped and accessible infrastructure to support the Psychology study programmes. As stated in SAR (pp. 60-61) and observed by experts during the site visit, the Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology operates within a 9,000 m² building that includes 41 classrooms, five computer labs, a library with a reading room, and free-access computers for

students. The faculty also offers wireless internet, a canteen, a gym, outdoor sports facilities, and a recreation area, ensuring a supportive learning environment. The premises are accessible to individuals with reduced mobility and conveniently located near public transport and parking.

Classrooms are modern and technologically equipped, featuring projection equipment, interactive screens, and document cameras, with select rooms offering video recording and streaming capabilities for remote learning. Investments in 3D printers, robotics kits, drones, and a VR lab further enhance educational opportunities. Students benefit from an E-learning platform (Moodle), SPSS software, and on-site IT support. As was confirmed in the meeting with both students and graduates, the access to SPSS software is available from home.

There are practice rooms available for psychological counselling for master's level students. Practice rooms have not changed much since the previous visit 6 years ago, however, they are sufficient for psychological counselling.

As it was outlined in SAR (p. 61) and was confirmed by members of teaching staff during the site visit, the UL follows a systematic approach to upgrading its infrastructure and the material and technical equipment, with annual equipment renewals and a transition toward laptop-based learning. As all stakeholders confirmed during the site visit, a major upcoming development is the relocation to the new House of Letters in Torņkalns, which will provide modernized facilities and advanced learning environments.

Overall, the university's infrastructure and material resources are well-maintained, and continuously improved, fully meeting the criterion.

1.3.3.

The UL has developed a structured and comprehensive system for the improvement and acquisition of methodological and informational resources, ensuring that library resources and databases effectively support the psychology study field. As stated in SAR (pp. 61-62), the UL Library operates as an accredited national library and is registered with the Ministry of Culture, ensuring its compliance with national academic and research standards. The library system is decentralized, comprising eight sectoral libraries, including the Library of Educational Sciences and Psychology, which houses the psychology collection. As was confirmed during the site visit, the library operates with extended hours, with some branches offering 24/7 access, ensuring that students and faculty have flexible and continuous access to study materials.

The UL has established clear procedures for updating and expanding library resources, ensuring that students and faculty have access to the latest literature. The acquisition of books, periodicals, and databases is conducted centrally, with funding allocated annually. New resources are procured based on recommendations from academic staff, student self-government, and library personnel, subject to approval by faculty leadership. Psychology faculty members are regularly informed about the possibility of ordering new materials, and lecturers are encouraged to review and update their course literature annually. This structured approach ensures that the library remains aligned with evolving academic and research needs.

The library collection is extensive and well-maintained, with 7777 copies of psychology-related publications across 3421 titles. A significant number of books are in Latvian and English, reflecting the university's commitment to supporting both local and international students. The collection has been consistently updated with new acquisitions, with 730 new psychology titles added since 2019. In addition to physical resources, students and faculty have free access to an extensive range of e-

resources, including 42 e-resource platforms, over 200 000 e-books, and more than 17 000 full-text e-journals. The psychology study field benefits from subscriptions to APA PsycArticles, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, SAGE Journals, and Wiley Online Library among many others. As students and graduates confirmed during the site visit, remote access to these resources is possible, ensuring students can engage with materials beyond campus.

The library is actively engaged in promoting information literacy, offering training programmes for students, academic staff, and researchers to improve their ability to navigate and utilize electronic resources effectively. Additionally, the UL e-resource repository provides open-access research materials, including doctoral dissertations, journal articles, and research reports. As described in the SAR (p. 69), the university also monitors database usage statistics biannually to assess and improve resource accessibility. Recent data indicate a significant increase in database usage, with notable growth in platforms such as JSTOR (+60.49%) and Wiley Online Library (+236.94%), highlighting the relevance and demand for these resources.

Overall, the UL Library system offers a well-structured approach to acquiring, updating, and providing access to library resources. The system ensures that both students and faculty members have the necessary tools to engage in high-quality academic work and research, reinforcing the university's commitment to academic excellence and continuous improvement. During the meetings with the students it was noted that the library is of good quality and especially students are appreciating the online databases available fully matching their academic needs.

1.3.4.

The UL provides a comprehensive and effective ICT infrastructure to support the study process in the psychology field. The university's Department of Information Technology ensures access to a wide range of software and cloud-based solutions, including Microsoft Office 365, as well as specialized research software such as SPSS, Question Pro, Autodesk, MathWorks MatLAB, and Esri ArcGIS. These tools facilitate coursework, research, and collaboration, while remote access is ensured through VPN connectivity. For online lectures, discussions, and study group interactions dedicated platforms for remote learning - MS Teams and BigBlueButton (BBB) - are used.

To support online and blended learning, the university has implemented two e-learning environments, estudijas.lu.lv and edu.lu.lv, both of which are built on Moodle. These platforms offer course materials, assessments, attendance tracking, and interactive learning activities, ensuring that students can engage with their studies in a structured and flexible manner. Furthermore, OneDrive (1TB cloud storage) is available for students and staff, facilitating secure file storage and sharing.

A key strength of UL's ICT infrastructure is the psychology laboratory, which provides equipment for behavioral and physiological measurements. The experts team was able to observe during the site visit that students and faculty have access to mobile EEG devices (OpenBCI), galvanic skin response and pulse measurement tools, a driving simulator, facial expression recognition software, VR glasses with eye-tracking capability, and computer-based cognitive tests measuring attention, memory, and executive functions. As stated in the SAR (p. 70), the Exploro platform and the Perceptual and Cognitive Systems Laboratory at the Faculty of Computer Science further enhance opportunities for advanced research. Laboratory technicians provide technical support and training, ensuring that students can effectively utilize these tools in their research and coursework.

It could be concluded that the UL's ICT solutions are appropriate and effective in supporting the study process in psychology. The combination of advanced software, cloud services, e-learning

platforms, research laboratory, and remote access solutions ensures that students and faculty have state-of-the-art technological support. The integration of ICT in both teaching and research significantly enhances learning outcomes, making it an integral and well-functioning component of the study process.

1.3.5.

The UL has established clear, structured, and transparent procedures for the recruitment and selection of teaching staff in the psychology study field. As mentioned in the SAR (pp. 71-72), the recruitment process is regulated by internal university policies and national legislation, ensuring compliance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions. The recruitment process follows established selection criteria for different academic positions. Professors and associate professors must demonstrate significant academic, research, and teaching experience, supported by a robust publication record and research project involvement. Other teaching staff, including assistant professors and lecturers, must meet minimum academic qualifications and engage in continuous professional development. The Hirsch index, used as an additional indicator of research activity, confirms that professors and associate professors in psychology exceed national minimum requirements, reinforcing the field's high academic standards.

The psychology study field has maintained a stable and qualified academic staff throughout the accreditation period, successfully balancing faculty retention and generational renewal. Since 2019, 30 staff members have held elective academic positions, with 19 serving as full-time faculty members and two contributing in researcher roles. The department also engages over 20 hourly lecturers, most of whom are active professionals in psychology, ensuring that students gain practical, real-world insights alongside academic instruction. This is particularly beneficial in the professional Master's study programme, where students train under experienced practitioners, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and applied psychology.

Throughout the accreditation period, the faculty has undergone staffing transitions and advancements, successfully electing new professors, associate professors, and assistant professors to replace outgoing faculty. The number of professors increased from five to six, with successful reappointments and promotions. Additionally, the department has been proactive in retaining talent, re-electing six assistant professors based on their teaching performance, professional development, and publication records. The integration of PhD students and early-career researchers into teaching roles has also been effective, ensuring academic renewal and continuity. During the meeting with the academic staff junior staff members expressed high satisfaction with the work content and work conditions.

Overall, the university's recruitment system fully meets the criterion by ensuring a stable faculty core, opportunities for career growth, and continuous academic renewal.

1.3.6.

The University of Latvia has a structured and purposeful approach to identifying and addressing the professional and didactic development needs of its teaching staff in the psychology study field. The UL Strategy 2021-2027 emphasizes the importance of academic staff development, career progression, and internationalization, ensuring that faculty members have access to professional growth opportunities. The university follows national regulations, which mandate that higher education lecturers complete 160 hours of professional development training during their election term. This training includes topics such as higher education didactics, educational management, and innovation in teaching. Additionally, the university implements evaluation measures for academic staff, ensuring that the effectiveness of training programmes is regularly assessed.

A wide range of professional development opportunities is available to academic staff. The Adult Pedagogical Education Centre (APEC) provides structured training programmes and other continuing education courses focused on curriculum development, student engagement, and academic leadership. According to the SAR (p. 75), the Department of Psychology actively participates in pedagogical competence-building initiatives, with 13 faculty members attending 32 specialized training courses from 2019 to 2022. These courses cover areas such as digital teaching methods, Moodle use, online and blended learning strategies, public speaking, and leadership skills. The university also offers English language proficiency courses, with 50% of psychology faculty members improving their language skills during the accreditation period.

The university fosters a collaborative learning culture through peer mentoring, open lectures, and faculty exchange initiatives. As it was discussed during the meeting with members of teaching staff, new faculty members work under the supervision of experienced colleagues, allowing them to observe, discuss, and implement best teaching practices. The peer observation programme enables faculty to observe each other's teaching, provide constructive feedback, and refine their teaching methodologies. Additionally, the university has introduced targeted training for faculty working with first-year students, helping them enhance student support, communication, and mentoring skills.

Mobility programmes and visiting scholar initiatives contribute to the exchange of knowledge and best practices. Four highly qualified international professors have contributed to psychology programmes during the accreditation period, enriching the curriculum with global perspectives. Moreover, the university actively engages psychology graduates who have pursued international Master's and Doctoral studies, successfully integrating them into teaching and research roles at UL. This strategy ensures that emerging academic talent with specialized international expertise contributes to the development of the psychology study field. However, there is low use and low interest for outgoing mobility programmes among Latvian academic staff as noted in the SWOT analysis in the SAR (p. 21).

The university systematically evaluates the impact of professional development initiatives through surveys and faculty feedback mechanisms. This data is used to refine training programmes and align them with higher education trends and faculty needs.

Overall, the UL fully meets the criterion for defining, implementing, and assessing the professional and didactic development of its teaching staff. The structured training programmes, peer mentoring initiatives, international collaborations, and continuous evaluation mechanisms ensure that faculty members receive targeted and effective professional development. This approach not only enhances teaching quality but also contributes to the sustainability and competitiveness of the psychology study field.

1.3.7.

The UL has established a structured and balanced workload system for the academic staff in the psychology study field, ensuring an equitable distribution of teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. The standard workload for academic staff is 1,600 hours per year, with 1,000 hours dedicated to academic work and 600 hours allocated for research activities. The university's workload distribution also accounts for thesis supervision and research engagement. Faculty members supervising Master's theses are allocated 24 hours per year, while those supervising PhD theses receive 50 hours per year, with an additional 20 hours per year for reviewing PhD dissertations. Lecturers and assistants without a scientific degree contribute to research by developing new study materials, which is recognized as part of their workload (up to 20 hours per semester). This system ensures that junior faculty members are engaged in academic development, while senior faculty maintain an active role in mentoring students and advancing research

initiatives.

During the site visit, the experts team asked to provide total and average working load of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the field of study in academic year 2024-2025. According to the provided statistics, the average weekly academic load for an assistant professor is 12,6 hours, for professor / senior researcher - 13,9 hours.

As stated in the SAR (p. 81), administrative responsibilities are integrated into faculty workload calculations. Academic staff holding administrative roles receive dedicated time allocations, such as 4 hours per week for managing a study programme and 10 hours per week for leading the Psychology Department.

The current workload distribution supports the university's broader institutional goals. By prioritizing academic work (teaching and mentoring students) while allocating substantial time for research activities, the structure facilitates high-quality education and advances the university's research output.

It can be concluded that the UL meets the criterion for maintaining a balanced and sustainable workload for academic staff. The clear allocation of teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities ensures that faculty members can effectively fulfill their roles without excessive strain, contributing to the long-term development and international competitiveness of the psychology study field.

1.3.8.

The UL has established a comprehensive student support system, addressing the academic, career, psychological, and administrative needs of students, including international, part-time, and special-needs students. The support framework is multi-layered and well-structured, ensuring that students receive individualized guidance throughout their academic journey.

As described in the SAR (pp. 81-82), students receive advisory support on study processes, including guidance on course selection, study programme requirements, and university regulations. First-year students benefit from a dedicated support programme, helping them adjust to academic life. The university also provides workshops on essential study skills, covering topics such as note-taking, scientific reading, time management, and dealing with exam anxiety. Faculty members, programme directors, and mentors are actively involved in guiding students in their academic progress. Additionally, the UL Library offers training and consultations on utilizing both physical and digital resources, ensuring students can efficiently access study materials.

Career development support is provided by the Career Centre in collaboration with faculty departments. Students have access to individual career consultations, workshops on career planning, job applications, and interview skills, and digital resources such as E-career, which connects students with internship and job opportunities. The university also maintains an up-to-date career website, offering insights into labour market trends, professional development, and career pathways.

The Department of Study Service offers individual and telephone-based counselling for students facing personal or study-related difficulties, such as relationship issues, stress, or emotional struggles. The Psychological Help Centre within the Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology provides additional specialized psychological support. This ensures that students have multiple avenues for seeking help in both academic and personal matters.

The university collaborates with the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) to organize events that introduce Latvian culture and traditions, helping international students engage with local peers. For students with special needs, the university works closely with Apeirons, an organization specializing in accessibility assessments, ensuring that new infrastructure and study programme provisions accommodate students with disabilities.

The Faculty Study Service Centre plays a central role in assisting students with study plans, course registrations, financial aid applications, and general university procedures. Administrators mediate communication between students and faculty, helping resolve issues related to academic debts, financial concerns, housing, internships, and extracurricular activities. Additionally, the FESP Student Council represents student interests at university, national, and international levels, advocating for students' academic, financial, and social well-being. The Student Council also promotes academic integrity, educates students on plagiarism prevention, and helps address complaints and concerns.

During the meetings with the students, the onboarding process for bachelor's level students was complimented and suggested as the role model for master's and doctoral level.

Overall, the University of Latvia has implemented a well-functioning student support system, ensuring that students from diverse backgrounds receive tailored assistance to meet their academic, career, psychological, and administrative needs.

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

The UL has established a comprehensive and well-functioning system for managing the psychology study field, ensuring financial sustainability, modern infrastructure, qualified academic staff, well-balanced workloads, and extensive student support services. The recruitment and advancement of teaching staff follow transparent and merit-based procedures, while continuous professional development opportunities enhance teaching quality. ICT solutions and infrastructure are well-developed, ensuring modern digital tools and research resources. Additionally, student support services are diverse and accessible, catering to academic, career, psychological, and administrative needs. However, while the overall system is effective, financial challenges in MSP and DSP, as well as the need for further diversification of research funding sources, remain areas for improvement.

Strengths:

- 1) Modern and well-equipped infrastructure, including state-of-the-art research laboratories, e-learning tools, and library resources.
- 2) A structured and transparent recruitment system for teaching staff, ensuring qualified professionals and academic renewal.
- 3) Comprehensive professional development programmes, supporting pedagogical and research skills enhancement.
- 4) Strong ICT infrastructure, supporting remote learning, research, and hybrid teaching approaches.
- 5) Well-developed student support system, providing academic guidance, career counseling, psychological services, and special accommodations.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Financial sustainability concerns for MSP and DSP, which rely on cross-financing from other study levels.
- 2) Limited external research funding diversification, with a need for increased long-term stability in research funding sources.
- 3) The workload distribution system prioritizes academic work, which may limit faculty research time, impacting long-term research output.

- 4) Some administrative and student support services, such as career guidance, are primarily available in Latvian, potentially limiting accessibility for international students.
- 5) Low use and low interest for mobility programmes among academic staff.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1.

Scientific research in psychology spans various subfields, including developmental, educational, clinical, social, as well as general and cognitive psychology. During the reporting period, the focus areas and research topics were shaped by prior academic work, the research interests of faculty members, and the availability of project funding for specific topics (SAR, p. 84). A key aspect of this period was the active involvement of academic staff in interdisciplinary research projects, collaborating with experts from other disciplines and representatives of the public sector. Enhancing research activity was identified as a priority for the field's development during this period. Faculty members were encouraged not only to secure research funding but also to actively seek participation in ongoing international projects by contributing to data collection and analysis, preparing publications, and engaging in networking activities such as European Cooperation in Science & Technology (COST) actions. The combination of systematic efforts to foster research and an increase in scientific funding compared to previous accreditation periods demonstrates that the prioritization of research development has been successfully implemented. The progress in research directions during this period aligns with the broader goal of advancing the field - stimulating research activity among faculty, fostering collaboration with experts from social and natural sciences, and enhancing the psychology laboratory's operations. This development is also consistent with the University of Latvia's strategic objective G1, which aims to strengthen its status as an internationally recognized research institution. Given the substantial emphasis on applied and interdisciplinary research, the work conducted within the psychology field contributes to the strategic objective G3, which focuses on leveraging university research for Latvia's growth. In the long run, this dynamic research development will position the field as a leading center for psychological and interdisciplinary studies in Northern Europe, specializing in traffic psychology, educational psychology, economic psychology, biobehavioral economics, and political psychology, as well as in the development, adaptation, and standardization of psychological assessment tools.

1.4.2.

Scientific research within the field of Psychology at UL is carried out at all three Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral levels. (SAR p. 85). There is sufficient emphasis on independent research work. This is shown mainly by the feedback from students, including information received during the site visit in meetings with students. The integration of scientific research into the study process is achieved through various approaches:

- Students, particularly undergraduates and those enrolled in introductory and foundational psychology courses, have the opportunity to engage in research conducted by faculty members;
- This participation can be voluntary, as research subjects, or incorporated into coursework, allowing students to earn credit points while gaining firsthand experience with the research process;
- Research involvement extends to students working on coursework, bachelor's theses, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations. When funding permits, students may also contribute to ongoing research projects;
- Faculty members incorporate their own and their colleagues' research findings into their teaching, complementing global research insights with examples from studies conducted within the Latvian cultural context to illustrate specific psychological phenomena.

Students have access to the psychology laboratory's equipment and cognitive process test battery for use in their research. This integration of scientific research into education aligns with global best practices in psychology and supports the broader objective of advancing the field. It fosters research engagement among faculty, strengthens interdisciplinary collaboration with experts in social and natural sciences, and enhances the activities of the psychology laboratory.

1.4.3.

International research collaboration within the study field has remained relatively stable throughout the reporting period (SAR p. 86). Each academic year has seen participation in at least three international research projects, with some years exceeding this number. Notable examples of international cooperation include projects such as the International Awards Program of the Society for the Study of School Psychology (SSSP)-funded project "Intercultural School Climate Study", conducted in partnership with the University of Connecticut (USA), which involved adapting and validating the School Climate Survey for use in Latvia. Another key initiative is the global research project "Global Perspectives on Teacher Well-being and Mental Health after the COVID-19 Pandemic", led by the University of Warwick (UK), Tulane University (USA), and Georgia State University (USA). Additionally, Erasmus+ projects, including "Teaching to Be: Supporting Teachers' Professional Development and Well-being in Social and Emotional Learning" and "Learning to Be: Developing Practices and Methodologies for Assessing Social, Emotional, and Health Skills in Education Systems (Learn2Be)." Another significant collaboration is the Latvian-Lithuanian-Taiwanese project "School-age Children's Internet Use in Relation to Socio-emotional Development and Parenting Practices in Latvia, Lithuania, and Taiwan: A Longitudinal Study,". Furthermore, Anda Gaitniece-Putāne and Alla Plaude have played an important role as experts in the European Union Erasmus+ Framework Action 2 (KA2) strategic partnership project "Supporting Teachers' Adaptive Capacity to Deliver Quality Online Learning." Beyond participation in research projects, academic staff members have actively engaged in international research collaborations and networks throughout the reporting period. Notable examples include cooperation with research teams from two Australian universities on cross-cultural studies. This involved data collection for an international research project at the University of Melbourne (Australia) in 2019, as well as another project at the University of Queensland (Australia). Both cases contributed not only to data collection but also to the analysis and publication of research findings. Another significant example is data collection for an international study on human behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic as part of the International Collaboration on the Social & Moral Psychology of COVID-19 Project. This collaboration resulted in several high-impact publications, further demonstrating the field's engagement in global research initiatives. Participation in international research projects enhances the academic staff's research experience, expands professional networks, and fosters opportunities for future collaborations. It also enables faculty members to contribute to high-quality publications, both as lead authors and co-authors.

During the reporting period, international cooperation in both scientific and applied research has been assessed as strong and aligned with the study field's development goals. These include promoting research activity among faculty members, strengthening collaboration with experts in social and natural sciences, and further developing the psychology laboratory's operations.

1.4.4.

During the reporting period, teaching staff of the study field were involved in 47 research projects, receiving funding from both the University of Latvia and international sources, with 23 of these projects led by academic staff (SAR pp. 87-89). The overall research performance in both scientific and applied psychology has been highly commendable. This is most clearly reflected in the notable growth of indexed scientific publications in the field and the increasing citation rates of faculty

members. During the reporting period, academic staff and PhD students in the study field published a total of 196 works, the majority of which appeared in international peer-reviewed journals. Of these, 86 were published in Scopus/Web of Science indexed journals, along with contributions to peer-reviewed proceedings of international conferences. Academic staff also delivered 129 conference presentations, with 114 presented at international conferences. However, internal mechanisms for promoting academic staff involvement in research remains unclear. Overall, the research activity in the study field is considered high, with outcomes aligning well with its development objectives - enhancing faculty research engagement, fostering collaboration with experts from social and natural sciences, and strengthening the psychology laboratory's operations. Despite these positive trends, further increasing research activity and expanding research directions remain key priorities for the continued advancement of the psychology field.

1.4.5.

During the reporting period (SAR pp. 89-90) multiple Bachelor's and Master's theses were developed and defended based on topics related to ongoing and recent research projects. PhD students have also contributed to the study process by assisting lecturers in conducting seminars within their areas of expertise and supervising coursework and Bachelor's theses related to their dissertation topics. This approach not only engages undergraduate students in current research but also facilitates the integration of research findings into the teaching process.

Undergraduate students have the opportunity to take part in psychology research conducted by academic staff and senior students. This participation can be voluntary or serve as a way to earn partial credit points in an academic placement course, as well as in certain introductory psychology and core subdiscipline courses. Students are introduced to thematic research circles when developing their coursework, allowing them to choose a topic for their coursework and later their Bachelor's thesis under the supervision of a specific staff member. Each scientific supervisor tailors these thematic circles to align with their research interests, academic programmes, and ongoing projects. For certain projects, lecturers may offer predefined topics for Bachelor's and Master's theses based on specific research questions. These projects are typically conducted as pilot studies or as part of a broader series of research studies. When multiple students contribute to a single supervisor's research, tasks are distributed to ensure that each student can independently develop their final thesis to its full potential. If the research findings are published, students may have the opportunity to be credited as co-authors. During the reporting period, findings from more than 30 Bachelor's and Master's theses were published, primarily in the *Baltic Journal of Psychology* and the *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference of the University of Latvia: Human, Technologies, and Quality of Education*.

Thematic research circles are updated at the beginning of each academic year and are made available to students at least one month before the deadline for topic selection. The final thesis follows a principle of continuity and development. From the outset, students are encouraged to consider how their chosen topic can evolve into empirical research, not only for their Bachelor's thesis but potentially for a Master's thesis as well. This approach allows students to design their own individual research programmes, which are then integrated into the broader research framework of the field through alignment with their supervisor's research interests. The research topics planned by PhD students are usually linked to the research interests of the thesis supervisor and the relevant sub-discipline. In the case where research funding is available to the thesis supervisor, doctoral students may be offered a research position related to a specific project topic, directly involving students at doctoral level in the research process. During the reporting period, all research projects carried out in the Department of Psychology have involved doctoral students.

1.4.6.

There are several innovative solutions applied in the study field during the reporting period (SAR, p. 91). The first innovation was related to rapid transition to remote learning and reorganisation of the study process, which led to optimisation and flexibility of some aspects of the study and administrative processes. The second area of innovation during the reporting period focused on developing and implementing research ethics review mechanisms in the UL, FESP, and the study field. The third innovation includes the initiative to supplement the assessment criteria for the Master's thesis with the possibility for students to produce a popular science summary of their Master's thesis, which can be awarded an additional assessment point.

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

There is a significant progress in scientific activity within the UL psychology field. Scientific research and the outcomes thereof are integrated in the study process in the study programmes of all levels. Overall, the study field demonstrates significant progress in scientific activity, particularly in international collaborations and peer-reviewed publications. However, challenges remain in doctoral education, particularly regarding funding and the timely completion of PhD theses.

Strengths:

1) The involvement of academic staff in scientific research is increasing and becoming more and more efficient. This is shown both by the number of peer reviewed publications, and by the listing of projects where representatives of the UL Psychology field actively are taking part.

Weaknesses:

1) Internal mechanisms for promoting academic staff's involvement in research remains unclear.
2) The challenges faced by PhD students, such as the lack of financial support and difficulties in completing research within the given timeframe, significantly impact the overall research output. Addressing these issues through policy changes or additional funding opportunities could enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of doctoral education in psychology.

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: Fully compliant

The directions of scientific research are relevant for the study field. The connection of scientific research with the study process is logical and justified. Main indicators of scientific research (number of scientific publications, participation in research projects, involvement of students and academic staff, international cooperation in the research, innovations), are fully compliant.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1.

The Department of Psychology at the University of Latvia is a well-established institution with well-articulated positions on cooperation with other institutions, both nationally and internationally. Two main institutions at the national level that are the focus of institutional cooperation are Daugavpils University and Riga Stradiņš University. Their cooperation takes place at all three levels of education: bachelor, master and doctorate. The cooperation that has been established corresponds to the specific characteristics and needs of the submitted study as well as to specific study

programmes. The cooperation of academic staff is carried out within the framework of various research and training projects and takes place in various professional organisations, such as Latvian Association of Clinical Psychologists, Crisis and Counseling Centre 'Skalbes', or it is related to concrete research projects. The institutions and partners for cooperation are carefully selected according to the needs of each level of study. However, it is important to emphasise that the Department's collaborations are much broader, involving more other institutions, such as National Centre for Educational Content or RIX Technologies, and that academic staff have established individual and Departmental collaborations with a number of other institutions, as well as with individual researchers and professionals in the field. In particular, it was noted (SAR, pp. 92-93; Annex 10) that there is also an emphasis on research collaboration and participation in joint projects. This is very important for strengthening research activities and overall research output, which is still recognised as an area that needs additional stimulation and support. The study field pays special attention to having a wide range of different institutions that could provide a placement for students internship.

In a small country with a correspondingly small number of psychology study programmes, such institutional and collective behaviour is very positive and could contribute significantly to the overall development and advancement of the field of psychology.

It could be emphasised that efforts to broaden the scope of national cooperation in the field of psychology, both with individual experts and researchers and at institutional level, contribute significantly to the quality of teaching and research at all three levels of education. During the site visit, but also based on all the interviews and documents available, the experts observed that selected collaborations are well aligned with existing study programmes, individual study programme curricula and defined learning outcomes.

1.5.2.

Special efforts are made to attract individual international and local experts and researchers who also contribute to the teaching process. It is difficult to develop all segments and subfields of psychology due to limited resources, and this fact makes it even more important to be open to cooperation with other institutions and individuals from abroad. Given the diversity of the study programmes, culture, traditions in psychology and historical preferences, it is equally relevant to collaborate with other institutions and academics and professionals in the region as well as in other parts of Europe. The fact that some of the academic staff employed in the Department have been trained abroad and have established professional and academic networks could be very beneficial in further strengthening collaborations with international institutions. For example, the previous collaboration and training process of some staff members led to new projects and joint work on data collection, analysis and interpretation, and ultimately publication. This approach simultaneously contributed to the research output, but also provided an opportunity for students to be more directly involved in projects. The examples given, both in the prepared documents (SAR, pg. 94-95) and in the information shared during the site visit, demonstrated that international cooperation is a focus of both the study field and individual academic staff. For example, the collaboration has been established with Australian universities (University of Melbourne, University of Queensland) or with European Association for Social Psychology.

Academic staff have been involved in some projects with a number of participants from a number of other countries in Europe, but there has also been some experience of working with colleagues from other continents, such as Australia. The overall impact of international cooperation is undoubtedly positive, and it fits well with the study programmes in all three educational cycles, supports research, enriches experience and gives the opportunity to share many good practices. Motivated by

established collaborations, some foreign academics came for shorter visits and gave a course, which was useful for strengthening collaborations, but also for students; this was particularly the case at doctoral level, where both online and on-site lectures were held with experts from well-established universities in other countries.

As much as it is important to have a number of agreements with other institutions to provide internships for different branches of psychology, it is equally important that UL has signed agreements for mobility cooperation with different European universities and/or joint work within different projects. There are a number of institutions at national level and a significant number of European universities in different European countries.

It was difficult to fully identify how much cooperation with other institutions, especially international cooperation, is linked to some strategic objectives. It seems that the impact of international cooperation could be even greater if there is a clear strategy of who to cooperate with and with what objectives. In addition, it would be good for the further development of the department to put more emphasis on research projects and not predominantly on professional projects, associations, etc. While the professional aspect seems to be well developed and in focus, it is not the same feeling with the academic and research profile.

1.5.3.

When it comes to attracting foreign academic staff and motivating students to be mobile, there still seems to be considerable room for improvement, although outgoing mobility is set up as one of the priorities (SAR, pp. 98). It is a fact, not to be underestimated, that the Department has experience in hosting teachers from foreign institutions, but it seems to be still sporadic and not based on a clear annual planning for hosting international staff. According to the information provided during the site visit, the experts had the impression that guest lecturing is more the result of individual efforts by academic staff and certain pre-existing collaborations.

Nevertheless, there are some guest lecturers every academic year and both staff and students are exposed to new and different experiences. According to the feedback collected by the experts, it was perceived as a good and beneficial experience for both teachers and students. Obviously, the financial resources available are limited and this is not something that the department can easily solve. It is not easy to increase the number of foreign teachers and researchers in a more systematic way without adequate financial support and planned budget allocations, which could be a serious obstacle.

Student mobility is gradually increasing, and the Department is making extra efforts to attract students from other countries. At the level of the Department and field of study, the number of agreements with European universities has increased; experts were told that there are plans to try to attract foreign students to enrol for the whole cycle instead of just one semester. The language problem can sometimes be an issue, considering that very few incoming students speak the national language. However, most of the teaching staff and many of the students have a good command of English and this certainly helps in communicating and conducting classes (SAR, p. 96). The representatives from the department expressed plans for the future to attract more incoming students for a full course of study, rather than just a semester. It should be mentioned that although there is nothing against this goal, a semester stay for mobile students should not be overlooked and perceived as something less desirable. This is the most common form of student mobility and it contributes in many different ways and at many different levels both to the incoming students and to the host institutions, their staff and students.

The biggest problem identified is the very low number of outgoing students, at all three levels. When mobility does occur, it tends to be for very short periods. This type of mobility is also a good way to motivate and establish a culture of mobility within the students' home institutions, but it should not be seen as the only or the best way. Although there are various social, economic and possible other reasons why a small number of local students opt for mobility, the department should definitely make more systematic efforts to support mobility and to ensure a smooth and transparent way of recognising the learning outcomes achieved and the ECTS credits earned (especially now that ECTS is being officially introduced).

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

The process of cooperation and internationalisation is undoubtedly part of the Psychology Department's activities and is recognised as relevant for both academic staff and students. Similar emphasis has been placed on national cooperation and the establishment of joint work with a number of national institutions and individuals, as well as international cooperation with academic staff and institutions in the region, in Europe and beyond Europe. Obviously, given limited resources, international cooperation is easier when it takes place through international projects rather than on the basis of invitations from host institutions. The relative fluency in English of both academic staff and many students facilitates international collaboration. Further strategic planning and definition of goals for international cooperation could be beneficial for further institutional development and the development of the field of psychology.

Staff and student mobility is still insufficiently supported and established. Although the number of incoming students has increased significantly in recent years, the number of outgoing students is still low and needs to be further supported.

Strengths:

- 1) Established cooperation with a number of national institutions.
- 2) Established cooperation with individuals and within projects at international level.
- 3) English can easily be used as a language for teaching and learning.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Lack of alignment of international cooperation with strategic planning and focused objectives.
- 2) Prevalence of professional projects and cooperation, but insufficient focus on research.
- 3) Low outgoing mobility of students.

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

Significant positive changes have been made, followed by a number of activities, agreements and collaborations, but more focus is needed on international research projects, strategically planned international collaborations and greater support for mobility, both of students and staff. Although the number of international projects has increased, there are still fewer research projects compared to the number of professional projects; it is not clear what the strategic planning of international cooperation is and they are not evenly distributed across the different areas; mobility is still sporadic, mostly short, with limited numbers of incoming students, very low number of outgoing students and overall relatively low staff mobility, including administrative staff.

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

Analysis

1.6.1.

There were 13 short-term and 13 long-term recommendations provided for the study field and the corresponding study programmes during previous assessment of the study field. According to SAR Annex 14, as well as information obtained during the site visit, the majority of the recommendations were addressed.

Short-term recommendations:

1) Evaluate the effectiveness of admission criteria - addressed. New admission rules were implemented in 2020, leading to higher-grade applicants. Since the inclusion of mathematics in the admission test criteria, there is a stronger correlation between the admission results, the proportion of successfully graduated students and the grade obtained in the final (Bachelor's) thesis (SAR, pp. 45-46).

2) Assess future opportunities for learning materials in the state language - addressed. Course descriptions now include available Latvian literature; new textbooks are being published. Some examples include: "Psihológiskās novērtēšanas skrīninga instrumentu komplekta izstrāde bērnu agrīnās attīstības risku atpazīšanai" (Development of a psychological assessment screening toolkit for early childhood risk identification), "Profesionālā izdegšana: pamanīt un novērst izdegšanu, atgūt darba efektivitāti un dzīvesprieku" (Professional burnout: spot and prevent burnout, regain efficiency and vitality), "Attīstības psiholoģija: cilvēka attīstība visas dzīves garumā" (Developmental psychology: human development throughout life), "Stresa menedžments (sintoniskā stresa vadīšanas modeļa prasmju pašnovērtējums): papildu sevis pārbaudes materiāls" (Stress management (self-assessment of Syntononic Stress Management Model skills): additional self-assessment material), "Domāt precīzi vai daudzveidīgi - konverģenta un diverģenta domāšana: monogrāfija" (Thinking precisely or diversely - convergent and divergent thinking: a monograph), "Individuālpshiholoģija Latvijā" (Individual psychology in Latvia).

3) Evaluate the student survey system - addressed. Survey system confidentiality clarified; Information system of the University of Latvia (ULIS) ensures data security.

4) Expectations for academic staff and student requirements - addressed. Assessment criteria revised; grade distribution adjusted. New assessment criteria for Bachelor's theses have been developed, with a separate assessment criterion for excellence. Students receive an excellent grade for their theses where they show outstanding performance, demonstrating research skills that go beyond the requirements of a Bachelor's thesis. These students also receive a Rector's Certificate of Recognition for an outstanding Bachelor's thesis in psychology.

5) Significantly improve staff and student mobility - partially addressed. Mobility plan developed; new Erasmus+ agreements signed, e.g. Otto-Friedrich Universität Bamberg, HMKW University of Applied Sciences for Media, Communication and Management; Deggendorf Institute of Technology/ Technische Hochschule Deggendorf; University of Applied Management; Universität zu Köln; Universidade do Algarve; ISPA Instituto Universitario de Ciencias Psicologicas Sociais e da Vida P; Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași (SAR Annex 10). However, as mentioned in section 1.5 of this report, although the number of incoming students has increased significantly in recent years, the number of outgoing students is still low and needs to be further supported.

6) Evaluate the assessment system for excellence - addressed. Assessment system revised with clear standards (same as in number 4 previously).

7) Evaluate further possibilities to either provide students with all relevant learning materials in the state language or to provide more language learning opportunities at the start of their studies. - addressed. Students' feedback on the foreign language course is positive; literature in Latvian is available for introductory courses; new textbook published in 2023. Additionally, as it was observed during the site visit, English language skills have significantly improved for both the academic staff and students compared to the previous accreditation.

8) Increase the transparency of the (academic) nature of the ABSP "Psychology" and define clearer employment opportunities for those who choose not to enroll in the Master's study programme to qualify as psychologists - addressed. A graduate survey was conducted to collect employment data; graduates understand employability and skill development.

9) Develop a clear system for study programme improvements - addressed. According to SAR Annex 14, students' course evaluations have improved significantly after changing lecturers or bringing in another lecturer for previously low-rated courses. Similarly, one course with persistently low evaluations has been removed from the study programme and replaced by another, more relevant to the field of psychology, course which has very high evaluation. 98% of final year students in 2023 indicate that they are satisfied with the attitude of the teaching staff towards students and 98% also indicate that they are satisfied with the clarity of the knowledge assessment system.

10) Increase transparency of employment opportunities for graduates - addressed. Graduate survey conducted; employability data collected from 2017-2019 graduates and 2022-2023 graduates. Graduates understand the employability, limitations of working in the profession and recognise that they have developed digital, entrepreneurship, foreign language, communicative competences during their studies, which opens the door to a wide range of employability after graduation. Gathered information helps to provide more accurate information to students about graduates' job opportunities and experience after graduation.

11) Provide a range of internship opportunities - addressed. Internship model ensures students are placed in supportive environments.

12) Improve continuous feedback from employers - addressed. Employer survey revised; industry leader included in Study Field Council.

13) Evaluate the assessment system for higher standards - addressed. Workshops held; revised assessment methods implemented. Lecturers have designed and developed an appropriate and varied assessment system, as evidenced by the information provided in student surveys.

Long-term recommendations:

1) Regularly collect data for strategic planning - addressed. Surveys developed; results analyzed annually.

2) Develop a graduate survey system for benchmarking - partially addressed. A centralized graduate survey started in 2023, to be conducted annually. Currently UL has received the results for 1 year only, so further data collection and analysis are needed to establish trends and meaningful benchmarks over time.

- 3) Increase research focus for faculty - addressed. Faculty engaged in research projects; doctoral student participation emphasized.
- 4) Implement research-based teaching in Bachelor and Master study programmes - addressed. Research projects included in courses; faculty encouraged research involvement.
- 5) Upgrade research infrastructure - addressed. Laboratory space allocated; new EEG equipment acquired.
- 6) Develop social activities to promote psychology - addressed. Psychology Days, media presence, and student competitions organized.
- 7) Increase faculty and student participation in research collaborations - partially addressed. Participation in scientific conferences and Erasmus+ cooperation expanded. Every year at least 10 students participate in the scientific conference organised by RSU; at least 20 RSU students and vice versa use the survey database of the UL Department of Psychology every year; 15-25 students from Tallinn University take a course at the UL and vice versa. The exchange programme also includes exchange discussions between lecturers from both universities; a new Erasmus+ agreement with University Chieti Pescara has been signed, with 5 students going on exchange in 2022-2024. However, as mentioned in section 1.5 of this report, the number of outgoing students at all three levels is still quite low.
- 8) Ensure quality in doctoral study programme research - addressed. PhD applicants prioritized for research projects - the main candidates for studying in the DSP are those who are willing to work in research projects carried out by the Department of Psychology.
- 9) Review doctoral study programme courses and assessment system - addressed. Course structure revised - the relative weight of individual courses in the study programme was changed; assessment criteria improved.
- 10) Increase publication requirements for doctoral supervisors - partially addressed. Joint publication requirements introduced but not formally linked to teacher workload hours.
- 11) Ensure quality supervision of PhD theses - addressed. Supervision criteria refined; publication quality and number improved. An additional requirement for PhD supervisors to publish jointly with doctoral students, linking this to hours of research work planned in the workload.
- 12) Increase quality of PhD theses - partially addressed. Statutes revised; thesis discussion sections improved. Requirements for a PhD thesis as a body of scientific articles were developed and more clearly defined quality requirements for each section of the thesis (dissertation). However as not many theses were defended since the implementation of this recommendation, further assessment is needed to evaluate the impact of these changes on the overall quality of PhD theses. Continuous monitoring and feedback will help ensure that the revised requirements effectively enhance research standards.
- 13) Clarify doctoral study programme specialization - addressed. Degree and specialization clearly defined in study programme descriptions.

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

The recommendations provided by the experts during the previous accreditation of the study field have been implemented in accordance with the plan approved by the Psychology Study Field Council. The implementation of these recommendations has contributed to enhancing the quality of education, research activities, and overall academic environment at UL. However, some recommendations still require further improvements.

Strengths:

- 1) All short-term recommendations have been fully addressed, demonstrating a strong commitment to timely improvements.
- 2) Revising assessment standards and implementing clear grading criteria promotes academic rigor, ensures fair evaluations, and maintains high educational standards across study programmes.
- 3) Integrating research projects into courses fosters a strong research culture, enhances students' analytical skills, and better prepares them for academic and professional careers.
- 4) Implementing new admission rules that prioritize motivated and high-achieving students improves the overall academic level and engagement within the study field.
- 5) Upgrading laboratory facilities and acquiring new research tools (e.g., EEG equipment) strengthens research capabilities and supports high-quality academic projects.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Although a centralized graduate survey has been introduced, it only started in 2023, leaving room for improvement in data collection and longitudinal analysis.
- 2) While participation in conferences and Erasmus+ programmes has increased, there is still potential for more international joint research projects and publications.
- 3) Although revisions to course structures were made, more work is needed to strengthen transferable skills and ensure DSP alignment with research lines.

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 study field and programme management have taken the necessary steps to execute all short-term recommendations and most long-term recommendations, and the implementation plan is generally regarded as successfully completed.

Although a centralized graduate survey has been introduced, it only started in 2023, leaving room for improvement in data collection and longitudinal analysis. While participation in conferences and Erasmus+ programmes has increased, there is still potential for more international joint research projects and publications. Although revisions to course structures were made, more work is needed to strengthen transferable skills and ensure DSP alignment with research lines.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

- 1) Up to a 2-year period, address financial losses in the professional master (-12%) and doctoral (-53%) study programmes by increasing state subsidies, external research funding, and international student enrollment.

2) Up to a 2-year period, more focus on research and research projects must be present in international, but also in national, cooperation.
3) Up to a 2-year period, diversify funding sources through industry partnerships, grants, and applied psychology contracts.
4) Up to a 2-year period, adjust tuition fee structures for international students to align with financial sustainability goals without reducing accessibility for local students.
5) Up to a 2-year period, expand partnerships with international universities to attract foreign students and joint research projects.
6) Up to a 2-year period, enhance collaboration with industry and government institutions to secure externally funded research opportunities for students and faculty.
7) Up to a 2-year period, expand internship placements in hospitals, schools, organizational psychology roles, and government agencies to provide practical experience across all levels.
8) Up to a 2-year period, improve the publicly available information on the website of the UL about all three study programmes, including more detailed study plan description, information about academic staff, possibilities for students to get scholarships, as well as student-centered details on study content, course structure, learning outcomes, and practical aspects of study programme organization to better support prospective and current students in making informed decisions.
9) Up to a 2-year period, create and establish a guidance / guidebook in place for research article publishing emphasizing diverse and alternative sources, high-quality peer review publishers, journals and providing individual support and guidance to the student step-by-step through the whole process etc.
10) Up to a 2-year period, refine and expand the centralized graduate survey by ensuring consistent data collection over time, integrating longitudinal tracking mechanisms, and using the insights to enhance programme quality, career support services, and alignment with labor market needs.
11) Up to a 2-year period, streamline and clarify the division of responsibilities among heads and directors by simplifying role definitions, enhancing communication channels, and providing structured training or guidelines to ensure a shared understanding of accountabilities in practice.
12) Up to a 2-year period, strengthen stakeholder engagement in quality assurance by establishing formal feedback mechanisms for employers and graduates, such as advisory boards, regular consultation meetings, and structured surveys, ensuring their insights contribute to study programme development beyond internships.
13) Up to a 2-year period, implement a system to track whether students receive feedback on survey results and their implementation, such as publishing summary reports or organizing follow-up meetings where changes and decisions based on student input are communicated.

Long-term recommendations

1) Increase participation in student and faculty exchange programmes (e.g., Erasmus+, bilateral research projects) as mobility needs to be further developed and supported, both incoming and outgoing; although short stays are a good way to initiate mobility, longer periods - semesters, in particular for outgoing students - need to be further developed. To increase participation in student and faculty exchange programmes, the university should enhance promotion efforts through targeted campaigns and success stories, streamline administrative processes for easier application and credit recognition, provide additional financial support to encourage longer stays, expand bilateral agreements with international institutions, and strengthen language preparation and cultural integration support to facilitate both outgoing and incoming mobility.

2) The establishment of a research office could help to provide professional support for applying for and receiving more EU research grants; this would also greatly facilitate doctoral research and potentially provide additional funding for young researchers.

3) Better coordination between central services at university level and faculty/department level could increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the field of study. Certain services, such as those related to staff and student mobility, should be transparently defined and shared between the university and departments in order to avoid duplication of work and the need for more administrative staff, 'one stop shopping' could help to process this.

4) The workload of staff, taking into account both professional commitment and teaching and research duties, should be better balanced; staff cannot be predominantly engaged in different forms of professional work; this hinders further excellence in research.

5) Assess and improve collaboration opportunities overall with industry and involve more industry partners in quality assessment discussions.

6) Review psychological test and assessment administration and standardization system harmonizing it to the international practices by fully moving it to the private sector players/publishers. In addition, define guidelines of accessibility and training of the psychological testing tools administered for private sector professionals.

II - "Psychology" ASSESSMENT

II - "Psychology" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The study programme provides a substantial foundation for studies, ensuring to its graduates opportunities for academic education with a career in psychology science. The curriculum covers fundamental psychological theories, research methodologies, and practical applications, ensuring alignment with the broader study field (SAR Annex "22_course_descriptions_bsp_psychology.docx"). The structure of the study programme follows internationally recognized academic standards, integrating both theoretical knowledge and empirical research skills. Moreover, the inclusion of applied psychology components allows students to develop competencies relevant for various professional settings, further enhancing the study programme's compliance with the psychology study field.

2.1.2.

The title of the study programme, Academic Bachelor's Study Programme in Psychology, and its

code (43 - academic bachelor education, 313 - educational programme group of psychology under educational thematic area of social and human sciences) accurately reflects its content and purpose. The study programme aims to enable students to acquire basic academic education in psychology, to develop research skills and competences, to promote skills relevant for general employment such as critical thinking, information technology skills, social-communicative, cooperation and organisational skills, and to improve the ability to solve problems and make decisions independently.

This study programme is implemented in Latvian at the University of Latvia in Riga and is offered in two forms: full-time (three years of studies) and part-time (three years and five months of studies). The total volume of the study programme in both forms is 180 ECTS, in line with European academic standards for bachelor's degrees. Additionally, the study programme structure reflects student needs by offering flexible study options (full-time and part-time) and supports lifelong learning. The admission requirements are clearly defined and aligned with the expected prior knowledge and competencies of applicants, ensuring a smooth transition into higher education.

Overall, according to the expert's opinion, the study programme meets national and international academic requirements, and provides students with comprehensive training in psychology.

2.1.3.

Since the previous accreditation of the study field, no significant changes have been made to the overall indicators of the study programme and none are foreseen as part of the evaluation procedure for the study field. Several changes have been made to the content of the study programme, both during the accreditation period and in preparation for re-accreditation. Changes were made based on the basis of analysis of student evaluations, student suggestions for expanding the course offerings, the analysis of course content and potential overlaps, and the evaluation of the distribution of courses across semesters (SAR p. 157).

Besides, from 2024, the Law on Higher Education Institutions provides for the transition to ECTS - the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. The study programme indicators will therefore show a programme volume of 180 CP already in this ECTS system. Due to the policy change in the use of the national points system vs. ECTS, the study programme currently refers to both. This is not the best and fully transparent way to do it for several reasons, such as no clear alignment between the two systems, different meanings they have and different ways of calculating them. Although this is not up to the study programme being evaluated and not entirely in the hands of the department, it is not fully transparent and indirectly affects the curriculum. It certainly does not make it easier to recognise mobility, on the contrary.

The degree was also changed from "Bachelor of Social Sciences in Psychology" to "Bachelor's degree in Psychology".

2.1.4.

The Bachelor's study programme "Psychology" provides a substantial foundation for further academic and professional development. It equips graduates with broad theoretical knowledge, methodological competencies, and interdisciplinary skills, which are essential for pursuing advanced studies in psychology or related disciplines. The study programme fosters critical thinking, research skills, and ethical awareness, which are increasingly in demand in various professional fields.

The growing number of students in the BSP "Psychology" indicates a strong and increasing demand for psychological education. Enrolment has risen significantly from 93 students in 2013 to 511 in

2023, demonstrating a fivefold increase over a decade. Since the previous accreditation in 2019, when the number of students was 339, there has been an increase of 180 students, representing a growth of more than 50% (SAR, p. 161). This trend highlights the relevance of the study programme in the Latvian higher education landscape and its attractiveness to prospective students.

However, a notable challenge for ABSP is the relatively high dropout rate, with 60 to 80 students leaving the study programme annually, which accounts for approximately 12-15% of the total student body.

Although a Bachelor's degree in psychology does not grant direct access to a regulated profession, graduates develop transferable skills that allow them to pursue diverse career paths. The 2023 graduate survey (SAR, p. 161) provides valuable insights into employment trends:

- 20% of graduates secured jobs in psychology-related fields, including customer service, social services, special education assistance, mental health mentorship, HR, and teaching assistance;
- 8% were actively seeking jobs in psychology-related fields;
- 54% of graduates found employment in non-psychology-related fields, utilizing interdisciplinary skills in roles such as lawyer, office manager, bank administrator, and data analyst;
- 10% were actively looking for jobs outside the psychology sector, leveraging their additional qualifications;
- 8% were not currently working or looking for employment due to personal reasons.

These findings suggest that graduates apply their psychology education in a variety of fields, enhancing their employability across multiple sectors. Many students pursue psychology studies to complement their existing professions, such as teaching, healthcare, project management, and social work, demonstrating the programme's interdisciplinary applicability.

A significant proportion of BSP "Psychology" graduates choose to continue their studies at the master's level:

- 55% have enrolled in the professional Master's study programme in Psychology at UL.; 15% plan to continue their studies in psychology in the future;
- 12% have pursued or plan to pursue master's or postgraduate studies in other disciplines, including biostatistics, neurobiology, medicine, HR management, and IT.

The strong student enrolment growth and high percentage of graduates continuing to master's studies validate the economic and social relevance of the programme. The broad applicability of psychology knowledge across different sectors ensures that graduates have diverse career opportunities, even before obtaining professional qualifications at the master's level. However, to further enhance employment outcomes, it is recommended to:

- Strengthen career counseling and job placement services for psychology graduates;
- Expand opportunities for internships and practical training during the bachelor's programme;
- Foster collaborations with employers to create tailored career pathways in psychology-related industries.

Overall, the study programme successfully addresses both academic and professional needs, contributing to the development of the psychology field and its societal impact.

2.1.5. N/A

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

The title, code, degree to be obtained, aim, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements of the UL academic bachelor's study programme "Psychology" are interrelated and comply with the relevant normative regulations. The study programme meets the requirements of the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers Regulations and aligns with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) standards, ensuring international comparability and recognition.

The study programme meets academic and professional requirements, and continues to attract a growing number of students. Future improvements could focus on enhancing career guidance, expanding internship opportunities, and strengthening employer collaboration to further align with labor market needs.

The study programme follows international standards, ensuring both theoretical depth and practical applicability. All components of the study programme - title, degree, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements - are logically interconnected and meet regulatory and academic standards. The flexibility of full-time and part-time study modes allows for accessibility and accommodates diverse student needs.

No major structural changes have been made to the study programme since the previous accreditation. However, ongoing improvements have been implemented based on student feedback and curriculum analysis, including adjustments to course offerings, content distribution, and alignment with updated educational regulations. The study programme is transitioning to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), which will further standardize its framework.

The study programme demonstrates strong social and economic relevance, as evidenced by significant growth in student numbers. Graduate employment trends show that while a bachelor's degree in psychology does not lead directly to professional certification, students acquire valuable skills applicable in various fields, including HR, education, and social services. Additionally, a high percentage (55%) continue their studies in the master's study programme, ensuring the preparation of qualified professionals for psychology-related careers.

Strengths:

- 1) The study programme is logically integrated in the study field, providing a first stage in the professional education of psychologists at UL and has good prospects for sustainability.
- 2) The increase of student numbers shows a high social demand and a good reputation of the study programme.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Significant annual drop-out rate within the study programme.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The Bachelor study programme in Psychology is an academic study programme and lasts three years in full time and 3 years and 5 months in part time.

The study programme is made up of compulsory courses (147 CP), so-called limited elective courses (30 CP) and free elective courses (3 CP) (SAR, pg. 163). Students can study for 3 years if they study full-time, and 3 years and 5 months if they study part-time. It is not clear why a bachelor study

programme, which is an academic study programme, can be studied both full-time and part-time, while a master's degree can only be studied full-time, especially when it is known that older students, and at master's level, often also work.

When it comes to distribution of courses among mandatory and non-mandatory courses, sometimes it is hard to follow logic and to have clear argumentation on why some courses could be listed as non-mandatory (or as called limited elective courses). A good example of this is a Developmental Psychology course; or why is Health Psychology limited elective, while Introduction to Forensic Psychology is compulsory. On the other side, the advantage of the study programme is the fact that it covers a wide range of courses (e.g. Introduction to Science of Psychology, Social Psychology, Introduction to Genetics for Psychology Students, Civil Protection, Environment Protection, Organisational Psychology etc.) and students can gain knowledge of different subfields, which make it easier for them to decide what to specialise later (SAR Annex 17 and 21).

Thus, the study programme has a compulsory part that consists of study courses, academic internship (Annex 23) and bachelor's thesis. The so-called limited elective part includes courses from which students can choose and adapt these courses to their personal interests and possible future professional plans, and finally a free elective course that makes up a total of 3 CP (this course could be taken from the UL or any other institution).

Appropriate learning outcomes have been developed for each course and these fit with the overall outcomes of the study programme. The study programme has also focused on the needs and trends of the non-university sector and it seems that everyone is aware of the market and workforce needs. The specific situation is related to the fact that psychology is a regulated profession and with a three-year bachelor's degree students are not qualified to do the work of psychologists, which is actually in line with European professional standards. In general, it can be said that the study programme has been developed in accordance with national trends and the requirements of the psychology profession in Latvia.

Throughout the study programme, attention is also paid to research-based learning. On the one hand, students are exposed to courses that provide the basic knowledge and skills needed for research. At the same time, the role of research and the ability of students to do research is exaggerated, at least at the narrative level. It is an advantage when teaching is research-based, but students' expectations of research need to be matched with their knowledge and needs.

2.2.2. N/A.

2.2.3.

The ABSP in Psychology is the first step in the education of future psychologists and as such serves as the basis for further education. The range of courses ensures that students acquire knowledge of all basic principles, phenomena and methods of modern psychology. The composition of the courses and the possibility to choose different courses will also prepare students to be more interdisciplinary educated and well prepared to understand the interdisciplinary perspective of psychology, both in academic environments and in practice.

Different teaching methods are used in different courses and students are encouraged and supported to develop independence in the learning process. There appears to be a balance between theory and practice and students are actively involved in practical work relevant to the development of professional skills. At the same time, from the very beginning of their education, students begin to participate in simple research tasks, taking on different roles. This stimulates their confidence,

curiosity and creativity.

Therefore, from the very beginning of their bachelor education, students are exposed to a variety of teaching methods that allow them to acquire new knowledge in different acquisition processes; they have theoretical introductory lectures, but also interactive work; they have consolidating lectures, but also problem-solving time. Active learning, according to the SAR (pg. 165) and the information gathered during the site visit, is a regular way of working with students, especially during seminar time. Access to different resources of literature, especially in digitized form, also enable students to employ a more active learning process. Taking into account a wide range of courses, different methods will be adapted to the needs and objectives of specific courses. In order to stimulate teamwork and the process of learning how to work, share responsibilities and expectations with others, students often work in groups, they have discussions and they develop projects together. Student-centred teaching is fully embraced by academic staff and regularly implemented in the teaching process: Diversity of students' needs are recognised and respected; study programme is implemented in different ways, e.g full time or part time respecting students needs; implementing a wide array of pedagogical methods; students are supported to work independently, but being supported and assisted when needed; mutual respect between students and teaching staff (SAR, pp. 166).

All courses, teaching/learning materials and student assignments are organised in an e-platform (Moodle). Examinations are conducted in a variety of formats, oral, written, special project tasks. Grades are also made available to students via e-platform.

2.2.4.

In accordance with the UL regulations (Regulations of the academic internship have been approved by the Council of the FESP on 18 April, 2024), the ABSP in Psychology includes the course Academic Internship in Psychology. Students are gradually exposed to practical work until they acquire sufficient knowledge and skills to be more independent in their internship tasks. According to the information gathered during the site visit, the experts panel heard from students that they greatly appreciate this opportunity provided by the study programme and consider it to be one of the important benefits of their studies.

The aim of the internship is twofold: on the one hand, as an academic study programme, it supports the students' research skills; on the other hand, it helps them to better understand the scientific basis of the field and to better understand what their possible career opportunities might be. Although initial research experience is undoubtedly important, during the site visit the expert panel felt that the role and relationship of students to research at this very early stage was somewhat overstated, albeit with good intentions. Students are also supported to attend conferences, participate in thesis defences and thus be directly exposed to the scientific environment (SAR Annex 23, Internship Regulations).

At the ABSP, all work placement tasks are linked to the learning outcomes of the study programme. Career planning, as an important aspect of future professional life, is promoted through various meetings, opportunities to meet and talk with representatives from different subfields of psychology and to hear about their professional experiences.

2.2.5. N/A.

2.2.6.

Students studying psychology at bachelor's level can do their final thesis in different subfields,

although the majority of students choose clinical and health psychology. Interestingly, there is also a demand for other subfields, which is confirmed by the relatively quick employment after graduation. According to SAR, during the reporting period, 421 students graduated with a Bachelor's degree. The defence of the bachelor's degree is formal and regulated (SAR, pg. 169, Table 3.2.6.1). The overview of some selected topics of defended theses in different subfields shows the appropriateness of the topics from an academic perspective, but it also shows that the choice of topics is sensitive to market and societal demands. While some topics focus on some very specific phenomena in individual subfields of psychology, others are cross-disciplinary. In terms of population focus, the topics cover the whole population, span the life cycle, cover different levels of mental health and normal functioning, and address a number of relevant social issues. For example, a large proportion of theses are in the field of personality psychology, which deals with different aspects of individual functioning and often overlaps with topics in clinical, developmental and social psychology. On the other hand, they are also relevant to effective functioning in society. A particular interest in the labour market and the world of work is reflected in theses in the field of organisational psychology, where issues related to employee burnout, shift work, work stress, harassment at work, etc. are addressed.

The topics chosen for the bachelor's thesis provide a good entry into the labour market and prove that the students are prepared for the real sector. This vision was also reported by some of the employers who were invited as stakeholders during the site visit.

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

The content of the study programme Psychology is well prepared in its main points, adapted to the needs of the students and sensitive to the labour market. The content of the study programmes is structured in accordance with all regulations and requirements. It has been modernised, updated with teaching methods and digitised. The methods used contribute to the defined learning outcomes and students have well-organised opportunities for gradual exposure to different forms of internship. The topics of the students' final projects are relevant to the field and in line with the study programme.

Strengths:

- 1) It covers a wide range of courses to ensure a quality academic study programme.
- 2) Implementation of a variety of teaching methods adapted to specific courses.
- 3) Well-established and emphasised work placement system.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The distribution of courses between compulsory and elective courses has some disadvantages; some courses that are elective should be compulsory and vice versa.

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 provided information in SAR (pp. 173-174), as well as obtained during site visit shows that the ABSP “Psychology” at the UL is well-supported by adequate study, scientific, informational, material, and financial resources, ensuring a high-quality study process and the achievement of learning outcomes.

The study programme is currently housed in the Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology (FESP) in Riga, Imantas 7. līnija, with plans to move to the House of Letters. The UL Library provides extensive printed and digital resources, including the ProQuest Ebook Central Academic Complete collection (232,799 e-books) and APA PsycArticles (220,000 full-text research articles), ensuring access to essential academic materials. As was confirmed by students, they also have free of charge access to MS Office and SPSS software (also available from home), which are crucial for research and data analysis.

The ICT infrastructure is actively used in research, with several Bachelor’s theses integrating Psychology Laboratory technologies. Students have engaged in projects on EEG and moral decision-making, cognitive function and temperature, anxiety and interoception, and speech-based affect recognition, among others. The Perceptual and Cognitive Systems Laboratory (of the Faculty of Computer Science) has facilitated hands-on learning in eye movement research, haptic perception studies, and telemedicine applications for mental health. This high level of student involvement in technology-driven research demonstrates the effectiveness of the ICT resources in fostering practical research experience and supporting academic development.

Beyond academic provisions, students receive psychological support through the Psychological Assistance Centre, helping with adaptation, learning challenges, and personal issues. This contributes to student well-being and retention.

As there are no fundamental differences in terms of specific resources to ABSP, this topic is explored in more detail in Chapter 1.3 of this report (“Resources and Provision of the Study Field”).

Overall, the study programme has the necessary infrastructure, digital resources, research tools, and support services to ensure a high-quality learning experience, fully meeting the criterion.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.

The ABSP “Psychology” is financially viable and well-managed, with sufficient funding sources, a clear cost structure, and effective financial planning. The study programme's cost structure is carefully planned based on student numbers (currently there are 297 students, of which 52 are LV state funded students), academic staff workload, and operational expenses. The full-time study programme costs €2,230 per student annually, amounting to €477,230 per year, while the part-time study programme costs €1,606 per student annually, with a total cost of €477,123 per year. The calculations ensure that the study programme remains cost-effective, with minimum thresholds for financial viability.

The study programme operates at a sustainable level, with enrollment numbers exceeding the minimum requirements for cost-effectiveness (the minimum number of fee-paying students must be at least 190 or the state funded at least 320). The part-time study programme plays a key role in overall financial stability, and the university's annual financial reviews ensure long-term sustainability. However, it should be noted that profitability differs: for full-time Bachelor's study programme profitability is 2% and for part-time Bachelor's study programme profitability is 24%.

The criterion is fully met, with no significant financial risks identified.

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

The ABSP “Psychology” at the UL is well-supported in terms of infrastructure, scientific and informational resources, and financial sustainability. The UL Library and digital databases provide extensive academic materials, ensuring students have access to essential research tools. The Psychology Laboratory and software resources (e.g., SPSS, MS Office) support students' scientific and analytical skills, while the Psychological Assistance Centre enhances student well-being. Financially, the study programme is sustainable and cost-effective, with state funding and tuition fees ensuring its implementation. The part-time programme significantly contributes to financial stability, and the university maintains annual financial evaluations to adjust tuition fees and optimize resource allocation. Overall, the study programme meets the necessary conditions for a high-quality study process, with adequate funding, infrastructure, and scientific provision.

Strengths:

- 1) Comprehensive library resources, including ProQuest Ebook Central and APA PsycArticles, supporting academic and research needs.
- 2) Well-equipped Psychology Laboratory, allowing students to engage in scientific research and thesis work.
- 3) Access to essential research software (SPSS, MS Office), supporting data analysis and research projects.
- 4) Financial sustainability, with state funding and tuition fees covering operational costs, ensuring long-term viability.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Full-time study programme operates at a lower profitability margin (2%), making it more financially dependent on stable student numbers and requiring efficient cost management. Reliance on part-time tuition revenue for overall sustainability, which may pose a risk if part-time enrollment decreases.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The resources are sufficient for the successful implementation of the ABSP “Psychology”. The library resources are comprehensive, they include ProQuest Ebook Central and APA PsycArticles and support academic and research needs.

The Psychology Laboratory is well-equipped, allowing students to engage in scientific research and thesis work.

Students have access to essential research software (SPSS, MS Office) for data analysis and research projects.

The finances are balanced and sustainable, with state funding and tuition fees covering operational costs, which ensures long-term viability.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

The teaching staff of the study programme meet the requirement of the respective law stating that “at least five professors and associate professors shall participate in the implementation of the required part of the academic curriculum and the restricted part of the programme and shall be elected to the academic positions of the respective higher education institution.” A total of 7 professors and associate professors participate in the implementation. According to the SAR (SAR, 3.4.1.), there are 27 lecturers involved in the implementation of the Bachelor's study programme “Psychology”. 16 of them are teaching staff of the Department of Psychology (4 professors, 1 associate professor, 7 assistant professors, 2 lecturers, 1 researcher, 1 acting researcher; 12 lecturers have doctoral degrees, 4 are studying for doctoral degrees). Six lecturers are members of other faculties/departments of the UL (2 professors, 1 assistant professor, 3 lecturers). Five lecturers are included in the programme as hourly paid lecturers, two of them hold a PhD and 3 with a Master's degree, 17 of the teaching staff involved in the study programme have doctoral degrees in psychology (SAR, Annex 6).

Most of the involved teaching staff are either academic staff who are active in research and therefore able to ensure a high quality of learning in relation to the latest scientific knowledge in their field, or professionals recognised in the field of psychology or their field of expertise (SAR, Annex 6, Annex 7, Annex 9). Family psychology course is taught by a psychology doctor with over ten years of practical work experience as a family psychotherapist. Cognitive psychology is taught by a doctor of philology, a professor at the UL Computer Science faculty and long-term researcher in cognitive science.

There was observation by the experts that during the reporting period the knowledge of English language has increased significantly of the interviewed staff members and students.

The academic staff have been involved in the implementation of the study course as a result of the assessment of their individual qualifications. Teaching staff includes both experienced and recognized psychology practitioners who have successfully worked in their practices and the state institutions and private companies and academic staff participating in the research. The teaching staff members who do not have doctoral degree, have sufficient practical work experience. Thus the requirements by the Law on Higher Education Institutions (section 39) are fulfilled.

Overall, the qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate and the composition of the staff matches legal requirements. Also experts agree that the academic qualifications and professional experience of teaching staff allows to achieve the study programme objectives and learning outcomes.

2.4.2.

According to SAR (SAR section 3.4.2.), despite the slight changes in the teaching staff during the review period, all the courses are taught by specialists with the appropriate qualifications and experience in the field, able to realise the objective of the study programme and achieve the study outcomes.

A positive trend is the involvement of PhD students and the UL graduates in the implementation of the study programme, which contributes to staff renewal. For example, a former Bachelor's graduate who completed her Master's studies in cognitive neuroscience in the Netherlands has started

teaching a neuropsychology course in the Bachelor study programme. Interviews with the junior staff members during the site visit showed to experts high motivation to work for the UL and satisfaction with the team and work content.

2.4.3. N/A.

2.4.4.

According to the SAR (SAR, 3.4.2.), all professors and associate professors involved in the study programme are active in research, their Hirsch index in Scopus and Web of Science databases ranges from 3 to 8. Academic staff are leading researchers in the government funded research projects such as:

- 2022-2023 "Assessment of competences of higher education students and their development dynamics during the study period" within the ESF project No 8.3.6.2 "Establishment and implementation of the education quality monitoring system". 8.3.6.2/17/I/001 (No. ESS2022/442);
- 2023 - 2025 LSC grant Izp-2022/1-0374 Egocentric tendencies in drivers' judgements. Individual differences and opportunities for mitigation. Project leader, leading researcher.

Over the past six years, academic staff members have regularly published in peer-reviewed national and international journals, contributing to the advancement of psychological science. There are articles published in the journals such as Clinical and Experimental Obstetrics and Gynecology, International Journal of Psychology & Psychological Therapy, International Journal of Smart Education and Urban Society, European Journal of Social Psychology, European Journal of Developmental Psychology and others.

Additionally, faculty members actively participate in international research collaborations, conferences, and grant-funded projects, further strengthening the research profile of the study programme. During the review period oral presentations are given by the staff at the annual International Scientific Conference of the UL, the Annual Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, Athens, Greece, International Congress of Psychology and others. One professor has cooperated with data collection for a research project with Melbourne University in Australia. Staff members have been part of numerous Erasmus cooperation projects, to name a few: "Promoting Mental Health at Schools" , "Supporting teachers for developing intra-personal competencies and character education at school", "Supporting teachers to face the challenge of distance teaching".

Academic staff's engagement in applied research and professional practice ensures a strong link between academic knowledge and its practical implementation, aligning with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

2.4.5.

According to the SAR (SAR 3.4.5.), in order to ensure mutual cooperation between the teaching staff in the development of the course content, once a month meetings of the Department of Psychology are held, in which all the lecturers of the department participate, thus creating an opportunity to discuss and coordinate the content of the study courses.

Overall there are good practices in place ensuring exchange of knowledge and giving possibilities for cooperation such as seminars held where lecturers shared pedagogical techniques used in the study process and courses taught by two or more lecturers, either working in parallel groups or teaching different course topics, or by sharing the delivery of lectures and seminars.

The study programme director regularly discusses and forms working groups with both the teaching

staff and students on the course content, which allows for continuous improvement of the quality of studies. The results of student surveys are also taken into account in updating courses.

During the site visit bachelor's students noted that the introductory programme (onboarding) is very efficient at this level ensuring a smooth onboarding of the new students to the field and the UL processes and effective communication. Overall the staff members were rating the working environment and conditions and microclimate at the department at a good level.

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

The qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate and the composition of the staff matches legal requirements by the Law. There is a mechanism for mutual cooperation of the teaching staff in place. All professors and associate professors involved in the study programme are active in research.

Strengths:

- 1) There are strong and solid English language skills for the academic staff and they have improved during the review period.
- 2) A good balance of the staff involved in research and in psychology practice.
- 3) Renewal of the staff using PhD Candidates and the UL graduates is a good practice.
- 4) Informal meetings of academic staff and exchange of best practices.

Weaknesses: not identified

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The academic staff, including visiting professors, associate professors, docents, lecturers, and assistants, meet the qualification requirements necessary for the successful implementation of the study programme. Their qualifications align with the regulatory requirements, as outlined in the relevant higher education legislation. Many have extensive teaching experience, scientific publications in peer-reviewed journals, and active participation in research projects, demonstrating their academic and professional competence.

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

SAR Annex (Annex 17_BSP.docx) confirms that the study programme complies with Regulations No. 240 of the Cabinet of Ministers as of 13 May 2014 "Regulations on the National Standard for Academic Education" <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266187> (Available only in Latvian).

- 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 programme is implemented in Latvian. The study course descriptions however are prepared in Latvian and English and that can be accessed under SAR Annex 22_course_descriptions_bsp_psychology.docx. Descriptions comply with regulations set in Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma includes elements associated with the state-recognised documents of higher education (Cabinet Regulations No 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinājošus dokumentus" (only in Latvian)) as evident by provided samples (SAR Annex - BSP_Diploma_Diploma_supplement.zip).

- 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

Head of study field declaration certifies that the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements specified in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (SAR Annex - Professors involved in bachelors programme.docx). In the implementation of the study programme seven professors and associate professors are involved.

- 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

It can be concluded that the state language proficiency is compliant (as identified in the SAR annex - (IZPF_29.04.2024_Declaration_state_language.docx) with Cabinet Regulation No. 733 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language, the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language and the State Fee for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language" (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/330669>).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Sample of attached study agreement (SAR Annex - Study_agreements.zip) complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi" (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/152072>).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

UL has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another higher education institution if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. The agreements are specified in the SAR annexe "Agreement_student_takeover_DU_RSU.docx". It is specified that in case of discontinuation of this study programme, students are to be able to continue their studies at Daugavpils University in Bachelor's study programme "Psychology".

- 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

UL 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. It is ensured based on the SAR Annex "LU_17.05.2024_Rectors_declaration.docx" added to the annexes pursuant to paragraph 13.4 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 795 "Regulations Regarding Licensing of Study Programmes".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments are evident through analysis of the requirements and documents attached to the SAR, including statements signed by the Study Field Director, the Rector, approved by the UL Senate, etc.

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

The ABSP “Psychology” at the UL is a well-rounded and solid academic foundation for students pursuing a professional or academic career in psychology. It is comparable to other similar study programmes in the country in terms of structure, learning aims, and outcomes. The study programme provides students with a comprehensive set of basic skills necessary for their future endeavors. However, a notable challenge is the relatively high dropout rate, with 60 to 80 students leaving the study programme annually, which accounts for approximately 12-15% of the total student body.

The content of the study programme is thoughtfully designed, addressing student needs and aligning with labor market demands. It offers a wide range of courses to ensure a thorough academic foundation and employs diverse teaching methods adapted to the nature of each subject. Additionally, the study programme has a well-established work placement system, providing valuable practical experience. Despite these strengths, there are some concerns regarding the distribution of compulsory and elective courses, which could benefit from more balanced structuring.

Infrastructure, scientific resources, and financial sustainability are well-supported within the programme. The UL Library, along with access to databases such as ProQuest Ebook Central and APA PsycArticles, ensures students have the necessary academic materials for their studies and research. The Psychology Laboratory is equipped with essential software like SPSS and MS Office, facilitating students’ engagement in scientific inquiry. This is a good starting point, however a need for further improvements is needed.

Financially, the study programme is stable, supported by state funding and tuition fees. However, the full-time study programme operates with a narrow profit margin of 2%, making it reliant on stable student numbers. The financial health of the study programme is further supported by part-time tuition revenue, which presents a potential risk if part-time enrollment decreases.

The teaching staff involved in the study programme are well-qualified, meeting all legal requirements and maintaining a good balance between research-focused and practice-oriented professionals. The study programme has also seen positive developments in staff renewal, with the involvement of PhD students, and an improvement in their English language proficiency.

In summary, the ABSP “Psychology” at the UL successfully combines academic rigor with practical application, modern teaching methods, and robust infrastructural support. The experts team believes that addressing the high dropout rate, optimizing the course structure, and ensuring the financial resilience of the full-time study programme could further enhance its long-term effectiveness and sustainability.

Evaluation of the study programme "Psychology"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Psychology"

Short-term recommendations

- 1) While the ProQuest Ebook Central and PsycArticles databases provide ample digital resources, printed materials remain limited due to high student numbers. Up to a 2-year period, consider expanding print copies of key psychology textbooks.
- 2) Current lecture rooms are small for large groups, and while this issue will be addressed with the House of Letters relocation, interim solutions (e.g., alternative scheduling) could be explored in a 2-year period.
- 3) Up to a 2-year period, it is recommended to closely monitor the financial performance of the ABSP, as its current profitability margin for full-time studies is only 2%. Proactive financial oversight will help prevent potential future deficits.
- 4) Up to a 2-year period, strengthen connections with psychological clinics, research centers, and businesses to offer more hands-on experience for students.
- 5) Up to a 2-year period, in order to ensure an optimal distribution of compulsory and elective courses, additional adjustments of the Psychology programme might be beneficial.

Long-term recommendations

- 1) SPSS should be gradually replaced by R, as universities incur significant expenses for SPSS, while R is free, user-friendly, and widely recognized within the research community.
- 2) In the long term, the academic bachelor study programme should be primarily led by academic staff.
- 3) Academic staff mobility should be further developed and supported, both incoming and outgoing and mobility programmes promoted to the staff as the development opportunity.
- 4) With high dropout level of the students work should be done on the student engagement by having focus and regular engagement and satisfaction surveys and use of already existing support programmes at the UL explored (such as a mentoring programme run by the UL Alumni and administered by the UL Career Center) for student motivation and support.

II - "Psychology" ASSESSMENT

II - "Psychology" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The UL's professional master's study programme "Psychology" offers an opportunity for graduates of the bachelor's study programme in psychology to continue their studies and acquire the

professional education necessary for achieving certification to be practicing psychologists. The study programme ensures compliance with national and international standards for psychology education, integrating both theoretical knowledge and supervised practical training (SAR Annex 17_PMSP.docx). The curriculum includes advanced courses in psychological assessment, intervention techniques, and research methods, which are essential for professional practice. Examples include 'Psychological Assessment and Methods,' 'Psychological Counseling and the Basics of Psychotherapy,' and 'Basic Principles of Cognitive Behavioral Psychotherapy.' These courses equip students with the necessary skills for conducting assessments, applying evidence-based interventions, and utilizing research methodologies in professional psychology settings. Furthermore, the study programme fosters the development of ethical competence and critical thinking, aligning with the requirements of the psychology study field and meeting the needs of both academic and applied psychology domains.

2.1.2.

The title of the programme, Professional Master's Study Programme in Psychology, accurately reflects its content and purpose. It aligns with national educational regulations and ensures recognition within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The transition to the professional master's format ensures that graduates meet the legal requirements for certification as psychologists.

The degree to be obtained - Professional Master's Degree in Psychology - corresponds to the study programme's objectives and the requirements set by the Latvian Psychologists' Law. The qualification to be obtained - Psychologist. This qualification is a prerequisite for applying for professional certification and working as a licensed psychologist.

The study programme objectives emphasize the integration of scientific knowledge, research methodology, and professional training, preparing students for independent psychological practice. These objectives are aligned with the European Diploma in Psychology (EuroPsy) framework, ensuring compliance with international standards.

The learning outcomes demonstrate a clear progression from theoretical foundations to applied competencies. Students acquire skills in psychological assessment, intervention techniques, research methodology, and ethical decision-making, which are directly linked to professional requirements in clinical, educational, organizational, and forensic psychology. The study programme structure ensures that these competencies are developed through a combination of coursework, supervised practice, and research training.

The admission requirements ensure that only candidates with a relevant bachelor's degree in psychology or an equivalent qualification can enter the programme. This requirement is essential to maintain academic integrity and ensure that incoming students have the foundational knowledge necessary to engage in advanced psychological training (SAR pp.106 - 107).

The studies are organised as a full-time course only. Since many students are employed, it would be logical to have a part-time option, as is in the case at Bachelor's level. Having only a full-time option could be perceived as discriminatory, considering two types of students - those who work and those who do not. This has to be considered by the responsible persons and the department itself.

2.1.3.

During the previous accreditation period, no changes were made to the content. Only structural changes have been made to the study programme to make it more user-friendly for students, the

teaching staff and administrative staff.

To ensure the transfer of the UL accounting unit of studies, i.e., transfer of credit point to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), corresponding with the transitional provisions of Paragraph 93 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, by the order "On Changes in the Study Credit Point Accounting System in the University of Latvia" (the UL 31.01.2024. Order No. 1-4/45), beginning with the Autumn semester of 2024, it is determined that for higher-level (second-cycle) study programmes 1 ECTS credit point corresponds to a 25–27 hour study amount of work, including: 8-12 contact hours for full-time intramural studies (the order regarding the change in the study credit point accounting system at the University of Latvia is attached to SAR, which defines the number of study hours corresponding to one ECTS credit point (SAR p. 105). Besides, the English language was added to the form of organizing studies.

2.1.4.

There is a high demand for professional psychologists in the country. This situation has been observed already for several years (SAR pp. 108-109). The dynamics of the number of students in the last 5 years, the number of matriculated students has shown positive dynamics, with an increase of 35 students (55 in 2019/20 and 90 in 2024/25). Interest remains consistently highest in the field of clinical and health studies, with an average of 50 students during this accreditation period. In the other study specializations, the number of students is evenly distributed, typically up to 10 students. A survey of graduates (SAR, p. 108.) shows that all those who have applied have found a job as a psychologist or have started work in a field where it is possible to use the knowledge acquired in the Master's study programme "Psychology". Most of them have started work as psychologists in private or general practice, in the health sector, in psychological help and support centres, in public defence and/or in the social sphere, which generally makes psychological help more accessible. Graduates who have completed the study programme in English will have employment opportunities equivalent to those who studied in the Latvian stream. Upon graduation, they can begin their professional careers in accordance with the regulations of the respective country. European Union students who choose to continue living in Latvia will have to be certified in accordance with the Psychologists' Law, as well as pass the Latvian language state examination. Thus, the Professional Master's study programme "Psychology" contributes to the national economy and society as a whole. Mental health is considered one of the central aspects of human wellbeing.

2.1.5. N/A

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

The study programme provides a clear pathway to professional certification, meeting both national and international standards. Some subfields of psychology (e.g., forensic, organizational psychology) receive less student interest compared to clinical psychology. The title, degree, objectives, and learning outcomes are logically connected and aligned with professional accreditation requirements. The learning outcomes align with EuroPsy standards, ensuring international recognition.

Strengths:

- 1) The study programme provides a clear pathway to professional certification, meeting both national and international standards.
- 2) High employment rates among graduates confirm that the study programme effectively prepares students for the job market.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Some subfields of psychology (e.g., forensic, organizational psychology) receive less student interest compared to clinical psychology.
- 2) The transition from theoretical learning to supervised practical training could be better structured to ensure smoother adaptation to professional practice.
- 3) Too many students compared to the capacity of the study programme.
- 4) While having students who work, the study programme does not offer part-time studies.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The Master's study programme in Psychology is a two-year professional study programme. The study programme is developed according to the current development of the profession of psychologists in Latvia and in its organisation it follows The Law on Psychologists which entered into force in 2018. The study programme is eligible for students with Bachelor degree in Psychology, and after completing the professional study programme, the graduate can independently practice psychology as a psychologist. The law also defines four subfields: educational and school psychology, clinical and health psychology, legal and forensic psychology, and industrial and organisational psychology (SAR pg. 110, Annex 17). Accordingly, the study programme offers four subfields as branches (educational and school psychology, industrial and organisational psychology, clinical and health psychology, and legal/forensic psychology), but most students choose clinical and health psychology. This choice is partly linked to the labour market, at least for the time being. In terms of long-term planning, it would be beneficial to support and motivate the enrolled students and to distribute them more evenly across the different branches.

The compulsory part of the study programme consists of courses that build a foundation of knowledge, skills and competences required for professional work and in accordance with the relevant legislation that defines the work of psychologists (SAR Annex 18). Within this group of courses, there are also courses that prepare students to write a Master's thesis, which is due in the last semester. Depending on the branch-subfield that students choose for their specialisation, they will have courses that are relevant to their knowledge in the field. For example, students who decide to specialise in the field of military psychology, they will be offered a course in Military Psychology. Students will acquire in-depth knowledge, skills and competences related to the specific area of professional activity. In addition, students will choose additional elective courses to support their interests and to better prepare them for the labour market. The learning outcomes of each individual course and the overall learning outcomes of the study programme are interrelated. All programme outcomes are achieved through the outcome of each individual course. Although this is a professional study programme, there is also an emphasis on research and students are encouraged to participate in the research undertaken in the department and to use this in the development of their Master's thesis. This is achieved in part through individual courses in which students are given small research assignments, as well as during the preparation and work on their theses. All the courses that students take are in line with the Law on Psychologists and the Standard for the Profession of Psychologist (SAR Annex 19) and accordingly prepare them to be well trained professionals.

2.2.2.

The Master's thesis is the culmination of the study programme and represents the independent, supervised work of a student. It incorporates the knowledge and skills acquired during the course and demonstrates both theoretical and professional understanding of the field, in particular a chosen branch of specialisation (SAR, p. 111). The topic of the Master's thesis is chosen by the student and

reflects his/her professional interests. The Master's thesis can also serve, at least in the case of some very talented and motivated students, as the basis for a third cycle, the doctoral study programme. According to the Standards for the Profession of Psychologists, the Master's thesis contributes to the analytical and synthetic thinking that is so important for decision making and the ability to grasp different information and approaches. When choosing a topic for their Master's thesis, students are encouraged to base their research on the latest and most relevant achievements and findings in the field of psychology.

The degree awarded, Professional Master's degree in Psychology, is consistent with the name of the study programme itself, the objectives of the study programme and the description of the expected knowledge and skills that students will acquire. The knowledge, competencies and skills acquired in the study programme are consistent with the level of the Master's degree. According to the curriculum, the Master's thesis is developed in three phases (SAR, p.112). In the first phase, in the 2nd semester, students have a study course Master thesis 1, in which they receive new information on methodology, they work in seminars and as a final task they start developing a research project; in the second phase, in the 3rd semester, they work on theoretical background of their research and they develop research design; and finally in the 4th semester, students conduct research, do data collection, analysis and finalise their work and defend thesis. Some excellent students also have the opportunity to publish their thesis in a national psychology journal.

2.2.3.

The Master study programme in Psychology combines different approaches and teaching methods to achieve the learning outcomes of each course and the study programme as a whole. There is a high degree of diversification in the approaches to teaching and learning across the different courses, as well as in the examinations. Student-centred teaching is well established in the Department. As a professional study programme, the presence of continuous practical work during the two years of study is prominent. Students are trained in practical skills using various methods such as role-playing, supervision or recording and analysing practical work. In addition to lectures, students often work in working groups, discussions, they have interactive work, problem solving, etc. Particular attention is paid to seminar work, where the emphasis is on reading academic papers and discussing and deepening understanding of the issues. In terms of workload, more emphasis is placed on practical work than on theoretical courses (SAR, p. 112).

During the site visit, students expressed their satisfaction with their experience of the teaching staff, their approach and the willingness of the teaching staff to support individual students. Although still modest, the department intends to invite guest lecturers from other institutions and/or countries. This definitely contributes to the students' learning experience.

All courses, teaching/learning materials and student assignments are organised in an e-platform (Moodle). Examinations are conducted in a variety of formats, oral, written, special project assignments and grades are also made available to students via the e-platform. Student assessment is based on and follows the UL regulations. Different forms of examination are used, such as oral, written and/or practical work, and assessment is carried out at mid-term and at the end of the semester/course. Different methods are used to evaluate practical work, involving not only teachers but also peers (SAR, p. 113).

The Masters study programme could also be offered in English. The requirement for enrolling new students who will follow the programme in English is that they have at least a B2 level of English. There is a plan to offer a 2-year programme in psychology to foreign students, the whole study programme will be in English and it will be a full-time study. The idea behind this is that this study

programme could be attractive for adult international students, it could increase the competitiveness of the study and it could contribute positively to the departmental budget.

2.2.4.

The Master's study programme in Psychology is organised according to the four main institutional and national documents (UL regulations as well as national regulations for professional training). It includes an internship, a practical work during all semesters. While at the beginning of the study, the first semester focuses on the use of individual skills in research methods or conducting interviews, in the second semester, their skills are broadened. In the second year, students spend their placement in different institutions according to their interests and the field they are studying. For example, in clinical institutions, hospitals, municipal social service, children support center, prisons, different private firms etc. Students find placements either on their own or with the help of their teachers. The aim of work experience is to put the theoretical knowledge acquired by students into practice. During the placement students work in small groups, not more than 10, and each individual student could receive individual support and feedback. Each student has a dedicated supervisor. Placements enable students to learn about a variety of issues and to work with very different populations and in different settings. During the site visit, the experts heard from employers about a relatively high level of satisfaction with students and their willingness to undertake practical work.

Department has signed a number of agreements with different institutions that are willing to work with students and accept them as interns. In the last academic year there were about fifty such national agreements (SAR Annex 10). For example, the University Children's Hospital, the Crisis and Counselling Centre, the Riga Psychiatric and Narcological Centre, etc. Institutions are willing to accept students and provide them with a learning environment, as there is still a shortage of professionals in many environments. In addition to external institutions, a part of the students, especially in case of lack of external placements, could also do internships within the services offered by the department (Psychological Help Centre). Different branches/subfields have their own lists of institutions with which they collaborate and where students can do their internships, especially in the 2nd year of their studies.

If and when the study programme starts to work with foreign students, students who will be studying in the field of Clinical and Health Psychology will be able to do their internship at the Psychological Help Centre, an in-house service of the department. Other opportunities will also be available, such as either placements in their own environment or other types of placements that better suit their interests.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.

The study programme is completed after the defence of a Master's thesis. According to the SAR (SAR p. 116) there has been a noticeable increase in the number of defended theses for even 30% in the last five years. The majority of theses are in the area of clinical psychology (66%), and the rest are distributed among other subfields, with social psychology still being another popular area of research among students. For example, in clinical psychology, topics have dealt with traumatic events, child abuse experiences, well-being, etc., while in social psychology, topics have dealt with responding to social issues such as the cyber environment, the use of smart devices and modern technologies. In general, the topics within each subfield, but especially in clinical psychology, cover a wide range of topics and different populations, often addressing the most relevant issues either for individuals or for society as a whole.

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

The PMSP "Psychology" is a professional study programme with a strong emphasis on practical work in its content. The study programme is based on achievements in the field. Appropriate teaching methods are used that contribute to the study programme objectives and learning outcomes. The work placement is well organised, supervised and related to the learning outcomes. Students' final theses reflect new developments in the field.

Strengths:

- 1) The curriculum balances scientific knowledge, applied skills, and ethical training, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared for psychological practice.
- 2) Study programme provides students with practice placements, including an internal help centre, which is very well received by its clients.
- 3) Study programme is well recognised by external stakeholders.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Imbalanced distribution of students across different sub-fields/branches of psychology with potential negative long-term implications.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme is grounded in the latest scientific achievements and professional standards in psychology. This is evidenced by the structured development of the Master's thesis, which integrates research methodology, theoretical depth, and applied analysis, encouraging students to engage with current findings in their chosen specialisation. The thesis process fosters critical, analytical, and synthetic thinking - core competencies outlined in professional standard. Combined with a curriculum that balances scientific, practical and ethical training, and strong stakeholder recognition, the programme fully meets the requirement of being based on the latest developments in the field.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

The provided information in SAR (pp. 118-119), as well as obtained during site visit shows that the Professional Master Study Programme "Psychology" is supported by adequate study, scientific, informational, material, and financial resources, ensuring a high-quality study process and the achievement of learning outcomes.

The study programme is currently housed in the Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology (FESP) in Riga, Imantas 7. līnija. While the premises are well-equipped and furnished for teaching, some lecture rooms have limited capacity, making it challenging to accommodate larger student groups. However, this issue is expected to be resolved with the upcoming relocation to the "House of Letters", which will provide modern and spacious teaching facilities.

The UL Library, partly located within the faculty, offers extensive printed and electronic resources,

ensuring students have access to high-quality study materials. The ProQuest Ebook Central Academic Complete collection provides access to 232,799 e-books, and the PsycArticles database offers 220,000 full-text psychology research articles, supporting literature reviews, coursework, and thesis research. The library ensures that both Latvian and English-stream students have access to the necessary learning and scientific literature.

As it was confirmed by both students and alumni, students have access to free-use computers, MS Office software, and SPSS, which are essential for research and statistical analysis.

The ICT infrastructure is actively used in research, with several Master's theses integrating Psychology Laboratory technologies. It could be concluded that the Psychology Laboratory further enhances scientific research opportunities, offering physiological measurement devices, virtual reality tools, and behavioral prevention instruments. A laboratory assistant supports students in learning to use these tools, and at least three Master's theses have utilized brain wave and physiological response measurements, reflecting the integration of advanced research methodologies into student work. High level of student involvement in technology-driven research demonstrates the effectiveness of the ICT resources in fostering practical research experience and supporting academic development.

As there are no fundamental differences in terms of specific resources to PMSP, this topic is explored in more detail in Chapter 3 of this report ("Resources and Provision of the Study Field").

A distinct feature of the study programme is the Psychological Help Centre, which serves both as a student support service and a practical training site for second-year students specializing in clinical and health psychology. This facility not only enhances professional competence development but also promotes the application of psychological techniques and engagement in applied research. As it was mentioned by UL representatives during the site visit, the Centre is highly valued among Riga residents, with a waiting list of approximately three months, indicating a high demand for its services and the strong reputation of the programme's practical training component.

Overall, the PMSP "Psychology" has sufficient infrastructure, academic resources, research tools, and student support mechanisms to ensure a well-functioning and high-quality study process. The planned relocation to the "House of Letters" will further enhance the study programme's physical environment, addressing the current space limitations. The criterion is fully met, with strong scientific and professional training components.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.

The PMSP "Psychology" at the UL is currently not financially self-sustaining, as the full-time study format operates at a loss of -12% (SAR, pp. 121-122). However, the university has implemented financial strategies to maintain the study programme's viability while seeking new opportunities for cost-effectiveness and revenue growth.

The study programme is funded through state budget grants from the Ministry of Education and Science and tuition fees. For the 2023/2024 academic year, the state grant per full-time Master's student is €2,801.4, while the tuition fee is €2,400 per year. The total projected budget for the study programme is €348,042 per year, while the estimated total annual cost is €389,932, resulting in a funding gap. The cost per student is €2,785.23, meaning that the current tuition fee does not fully cover the study programme's expenses.

As stated in SAR (pp. 119-121), to achieve cost-effectiveness, the study programme would need at least 182 fee-paying students or 140 state-funded students. Currently, 140 students are enrolled, meeting the state-funded threshold but not the fee-paying requirement. Increasing tuition fees for local students would be financially burdensome and could reduce enrollment, so the university is focusing on an alternative revenue strategy: launching an English-language version of the programme to attract international students, with tuition fees set at €4,000 per year. This approach is expected to increase cost-effectiveness without raising tuition for local students. Expanding the study programme's capacity could improve financial sustainability by increasing revenue from international fee-paying students while maintaining government funding for state-supported students. However, this expansion would also require additional investments in faculty, infrastructure, and administrative resources to maintain quality standards. If the increase in revenue from additional students outweighs the added operational costs, the programme's cost-effectiveness would improve. But if resources are stretched too thin or the quality of education declines, it may impact the programme's reputation and long-term attractiveness to both local and international students.

Despite its financial challenges, the study programme remains sustainable because the Faculty cross-finances losses using profits from the ABSP, revenues from lifelong learning initiatives, and financial reserves. Additionally, the study programme receives financial support from the University's Study Quality Improvement Fund, ensuring continued investment in curriculum development and infrastructure.

To optimize costs, the faculty implements efficient student group formation and flexible study formats, including on-site and remote learning options. Tuition fees and operational costs are evaluated annually, allowing for adjustments based on cost increases and resource needs.

In summary, the PMSP "Psychology" currently operates at a loss, but the university has a clear financial strategy to address this issue. The planned English-language version is a key initiative for increasing financial sustainability without imposing additional financial burdens on local students. The study programme remains operationally viable due to cross-financing, financial reserves, and external funding sources. While financial challenges exist, the university's proactive planning and funding diversification strategies ensure that the study programme continues to be implemented effectively, meeting the criterion.

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

The PMSP "Psychology" at the UL is academically well-supported but faces financial challenges. The study programme benefits from modern scientific and informational resources, including an extensive library, digital databases, and research tools such as SPSS and physiological measurement devices. The Psychological Help Centre serves as both a practical training site and a highly demanded community service, reinforcing the programme's applied learning focus. However, the study programme currently operates at a financial loss (-12%), as tuition fees do not fully cover costs. To address this, the university plans to launch an English-language version of the programme, attracting international students at a higher tuition rate (€4,000 per year), ensuring future cost-effectiveness without increasing tuition fees for local students. The study programme's sustainability is currently maintained through cross-financing from the profitable Bachelor's programme, lifelong learning initiatives, and faculty reserves. While space limitations remain a minor issue, they will be resolved with the upcoming relocation to the "House of Letters", ensuring a modern and well-equipped learning environment. Overall, the study programme meets quality and infrastructure requirements, with financial sustainability being a key area for ongoing improvement.

Strengths:

- 1) Well-equipped Psychology Laboratory, offering advanced research tools for physiological and cognitive studies.
- 2) Extensive library resources, including ProQuest Ebook Central and PsycArticles, supporting scientific research and coursework.
- 3) Access to essential research software (SPSS, MS Office), ensuring data analysis and research skill development.
- 4) Psychological Help Centre serves as both a student training facility and a highly demanded service for the public, reinforcing practical learning and professional development.
- 5) Planned relocation to the "House of Letters", which will provide spacious and modern teaching facilities, resolving current space limitations.
- 6) Strategic plan to launch an English-language version of the study programme, increasing international student enrollment and financial sustainability.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The study programme currently operates at a loss (-12%), requiring financial cross-subsidization from other study programmes and faculty reserves.
- 2) Tuition fees for local students do not cover the study programme's costs, limiting financial flexibility.
- 3) The success of the financial strategy depends on attracting a sufficient number of international students, which may take time to materialize.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The resources are sufficient for the successful implementation of the PMSP "Psychology".

The Psychology Laboratory is well-equipped and offers advanced research tools for physiological and cognitive studies.

Library resources are extensive, they include ProQuest Ebook Central and PsycArticles for scientific research and coursework.

Students have good access to essential research software (SPSS, MS Office), which ensures data analysis and research skill development.

Psychological Help Centre serves as both a student training facility and a highly demanded service for the public, reinforcing practical learning and professional development.

Planned relocation to the "House of Letters" will provide spacious and modern teaching facilities, resolving current space limitations.

The finances are balanced. There is a strategic plan to launch an English-language version of the study programme, to increase international student enrollment and financial sustainability.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

According to the SAR (section 3.4.1.), all teaching staff involved in the implementation of the professional Master's study programme in psychology are suitably qualified and meet the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements of the regulatory enactments.

It involves 34 faculty members, 13 of whom are from the Department of Psychology at FESP. Of the total number of faculty members, 6 are professors, 8 assistant professors, 2 lecturers and 18 hourly-paid lecturers. Of the faculty members, 16 have doctoral degrees in psychology, 4 are PhD students in psychology, 16 have Master's degrees in psychology or other fields and 1 physician. There are at least 7 experienced professionals attracted as the lecturers.

The team consists of 13 faculty members actively engaged in research (their H-index in the Scopus and Web of Science databases ranges from 3 to 8) and 25 professionals actively practicing in their fields, most of whom are recognized experts in their respective areas. All faculty members have adequate English language proficiency (15% at C2, 59% at C1, and 26% at B2 levels), ensuring their ability to work effectively with students in the English stream.

The teaching staff of the professional Master's study programme meet the requirements set out in the laws and regulations. They have been involved in the implementation of the study course as a result of the assessment of their individual qualifications. Teaching staff includes experienced and recognized psychology practitioners who have successfully worked in their practices and the state institutions and private companies. The teaching staff members who do not have doctoral degrees, have sufficient practical work experience. Thus the requirements by the Law on Higher Education Institutions (section 39) are fulfilled. The experts agree that the academic qualifications and professional experience of teaching staff allows to achieve the study programme objectives and learning outcomes.

However, the experts were concerned about the teaching load of academic staff who are also heavily involved in professional work both within and outside the university. As much as this is welcome and certainly contributes to the professional aspect of the educational process, it is also an issue when it comes to the actual capacity of each individual academic staff member and the possible negative impact on the quality of teachers' performance. In addition, according to the information collected, the last intake of Masters students was large, which could have an additional negative impact on the overall educational process.

2.4.2.

According to the SAR (section 3.4.2.), during this accreditation period, there has been relatively little change in the teaching staff. The light fluctuations in the teaching staff are due to both lecturers going on sabbatical leave and the fact that no students were admitted in the branch of forensic psychology during the academic year under the reporting period (Academic Year 2021/2022). Changes in the composition of the teaching staff are also due to two professors becoming emeritus and two lecturers have stopped working at the UL. Although the strategy for the renewal of the staff is not precisely described in the SAR it was observed by the experts that doctoral students and graduates of the study programme are addressed for vacancies and career opportunities within the faculty.

2.4.3. N/A.

2.4.4.

The analysis made by the review of the list of scientific publications, conferences, projects, CVs of the teaching staff for the review period (SAR Annex 6, Annex 7 and Annex 9) indicates that all academic staff in the last six years have published in peer-reviewed editions, including international editions or have at least five years of practical experience in their field of expertise in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

It was observed by the experts that many staff members are heavily involved in professional counselling businesses and large scale government funded and procured projects raising a question of work and private life balance, burnout risks and full focus on academic work.

Over the past six years, academic staff members have regularly published in peer-reviewed national and international journals, contributing to the advancement of psychological science. Although the exact count is difficult to determine due to formatting and truncation (see SAR Annex 9), a rough estimate based on visible entries suggests over 300 publications during the reporting period (including articles, book chapters, methodological materials, and conference papers). The distribution of publication activity is different: The most active authors are extremely prolific with dozens of publications, particularly in mental health, SEL (social-emotional learning), and education. For e.g. one teaching staff has more than 15 publications, combining clinical, developmental, and health psychology. Other teachers are very active with numerous collaborative studies focused on digital competence, adolescent behavior, and parenting or active in political psychology and multinational comparative studies. Some teachers are moderately active authors with 2-5 scholarly contributions. Some staff members, primarily practitioners, are listed without publications or with only teaching and practical experience.

Main Topics and Research Areas include: Mental Health and Well-being: e.g., social-emotional learning, teacher mental health, burnout, psychological help-seeking; Digital Behavior and Media Use: adolescent internet use, digital competence, effects of digital media; Developmental and Educational Psychology: children's behavioral problems, parenting, school climate, academic self-efficacy; Health and Psychophysiology: studies related to immunity, hepatitis, and COVID-19's psychological effects; Social Psychology and Political Trust: attitudes toward government, societal pressure, conspiracy beliefs; Personality and Cross-cultural Studies: multinational research collaborations in personality, morality, and well-being; Forensic and Clinical Psychology: NICHD protocols, dissociation, trauma, grief, and perinatal loss.

There are articles published in the journals such as Clinical and Experimental Obstetrics and Gynecology, International Journal of Psychology & Psychological Therapy, International Journal of Smart Education and Urban Society, European Journal of Social Psychology, European Journal of Developmental Psychology and others. There is a strong interdisciplinary approach, especially in collaborative works with medical, educational, and technological fields. The department is heavily involved in EU and international projects like PROMEHS and DISCE. Several staff members publish in high-impact international journals (e.g., Frontiers in Psychology, Journal of Child and Family Studies). A visible emphasis is placed on applied psychology, especially education, social interventions, and health.

2.4.5.

According to the SAR (section 3.4.5.), in order to ensure mutual cooperation between the teaching staff in the development of the course content, once a month meetings of the Department of Psychology are held, in which all the lecturers of the department participate, thus creating an opportunity to discuss and coordinate the content of the study courses. The study programme director regularly discusses and forms working groups with both the teaching staff and students on the course content, which allows for continuous improvement of the quality of studies. The results of student surveys are also taken into account in updating courses. In addition, once a year, the study programme director conducts a discussion with the teaching staff after the teaching of the course in question, with the aim of identifying and analysing successful examples of practice, as well as discussing the development of the course in the following academic year.

As of 1 October 2024, 165 students are studying in the PMSP "Psychology" at the FESP, with 34

teaching staff members, which means that the student-faculty ratio is 5:1. However, the experts were concerned about the teaching load of academic staff who are also heavily involved in professional work both within and outside the university. As much as this is welcome and certainly contributes to the professional aspect of the educational process, it is also an issue when it comes to the actual capacity of each individual academic staff member and the possible negative impact on the quality of teachers' performance. In addition, according to the information collected, the last intake of Masters students was large, which could have an additional negative impact on the overall educational process.

It was noted by the master's students during the site visit that the introductory programme (onboarding) is not efficient at this level (or non-existent) limiting getting to know each other and smooth communication and networking. Overall the staff members were rating the working environment and conditions and microclimate at the department at a good level.

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

The qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate and the composition of the staff matches legal requirements by the Law on Higher Education Institutions. There is a mechanism for mutual cooperation of the teaching staff in place. The workload of the academic staff, especially practice outside the UL, is of the experts' concern.

Strengths:

- 1) Teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme are with high qualifications and include experienced practitioners in the psychology field.
- 2) There is a good command of English language skills observed and improvement compared to the previous review cycle.
- 3) A good balance of the staff involved in research and in psychology practice.
- 4) The UL has demonstrated capacity to attract new teaching staff from the alumni and doctoral students pool to replace the retiring members.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The high workload of academic staff, combined with professional roles outside the university, poses a risk of burnout and may compromise teaching quality.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The academic staff involved in the implementation of the PMSP "Psychology" (code 47313) complies with the requirements specified in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme are with high qualifications and include experienced practitioners in the psychology field.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

SAR Annex (Annex_17_PMSP.docx) confirms that the study programme complies with Regulations No. 305 of the Cabinet of Ministers as of 13 June 2023 "Regulations Regarding the State Standard for Professional Higher Education" <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/342818> (Available only in Latvian).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the professional standard of the Psychologists (agreed on in the tripartite cooperation sub-council for Vocational Education and Employment on 12.06.2019) as evident by the SAR Annex - Annex_18_PMSP_Compliance with Standard.docx

- 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 programme is implemented in Latvian and English. The study course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English and that can be accessed under SAR Annex_22_Course_descriptions_PMSP.docx. Descriptions comply with regulations set forth in Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma includes elements associated with the state-recognised documents of higher education (Cabinet Regulations No 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus" (only in Latvian)) as evident by provided samples (SAR Annex - PMSP_Diploma_Diploma_supplement_2.7z).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

It can be concluded that the state language proficiency is compliant (as identified in the SAR annex IZPF_29.04.2024_Declaration_state_language.docx) with Cabinet Regulation No. 733 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language, the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language and the State Fee for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language" (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/330669>).

- 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

It can be concluded that the teaching staff knowledge of the English level is at least B2 (as identified in the SAR annex (IZPF_29.04.2024_Declaration_English_B2.docx)).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Sample of attached study agreement (SAR Annex Study_agreements.zip) complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi" (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/152072>).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

UL has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another higher education institution if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. The agreements are specified in the SAR annex Agreement_student_takeover_DU_RSU.docx. It is specified that in case of discontinuation of this study programme, students are to be able to continue their studies at Daugavpils University in Master's study programme "Psychology" or at Riga Stradiņš University in Master's study programme "Health psychology".

- 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

UL 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. It is ensured based on the SAR Annex "LU_17.05.2024_Rectors_declaration.docx" added to the annexes pursuant to paragraph 13.4 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 795 "Regulations Regarding Licensing of Study Programmes".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Professional Master's study programme "Psychology" provides the Master's study programme in Psychology as defined by the Law on Psychologists (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/290115>). This is identified in the Annex 19_Normative_regulations_PMSP.docx

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments are evident through analysis of the requirements and documents attached to the SAR, including statements signed by the Study Field Director, the Rector, approved by the UL Senate, etc.

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

The PMSP "Psychology" at the UL offers a comprehensive and practice-oriented education for future psychologists. The study programme is well-structured, logically integrated within the broader psychology field, and aligned with labor market demands. It provides a natural progression for students pursuing professional qualifications and demonstrates strong potential for long-term sustainability. However, there is a noticeable imbalance in student interest, with up to 85% focusing on clinical and health psychology, while other subfields such as educational, organizational, and forensic psychology remain underrepresented.

The content of the study programme emphasizes practical experience, preparing students for independent professional work. It meets all national and institutional requirements and provides valuable practice placements, including opportunities at the university's Psychological Help Centre, which is highly appreciated by clients. External stakeholders also recognize the study programme's quality and relevance. Nonetheless, challenges persist, such as the heavy teaching workload combined with students' external professional commitments, which may impact academic quality. Additionally, the limited capacity of premises and the absence of a part-time study option pose difficulties, given the large student population.

From a financial perspective, the study programme is academically well-supported but financially strained, currently operating at a 12% loss. Tuition fees for local students do not cover operational costs, necessitating cross-financing from other programmes and faculty reserves. To address this issue, the university plans to introduce an English-language version of the study programme to attract international students, who will pay higher tuition fees. The upcoming relocation to the “House of Letters” is expected to alleviate space limitations, providing modern, well-equipped facilities that support high-quality teaching and research. Despite these positive steps, the study programme's financial stability remains dependent on the successful recruitment of international students.

The teaching staff involved in the PMSP “Psychology” possess the necessary qualifications and meet all legal requirements. They demonstrate a healthy balance between academic research and practical application, with improved English language skills noted during the review period. However, the onboarding process for new Master’s level students could benefit from further development to facilitate a smoother transition into the study programme.

In summary, the PMSP in Psychology at UL successfully combines practical training with academic rigor, providing students with the skills and knowledge needed for their professional careers. The study programme’s strengths lie in its practical orientation, modern infrastructure, and strategic plans for internationalization. To ensure long-term success, the university should address the financial deficit, promote greater interest in underrepresented psychology subfields, and improve the student onboarding process.

Evaluation of the study programme "Psychology"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Psychology"

Short-term recommendations

- 1) The PMSP operates at a -12% loss, requiring a strategic plan to reduce financial dependence on Bachelor’s study programme revenues. The planned English-language track is a promising strategy, but during the next 2 years active international promotion is needed to attract sufficient students.
- 2) The Psychological Help Centre is highly valued by the public, with a three-month waiting list, demonstrating a need for expansion. Additional practical training placements in hospitals, clinics, and corporate psychology settings could further enhance student experience in the next 2 years.
- 3) Up to a 2-year period, expand joint degree or exchange opportunities with universities abroad, increasing student mobility and study programme’s visibility.
- 4) While raising tuition fees for local students may be unrealistic, reviewing pricing structures for non-EU/EEA students could improve financial viability in the next 2 years.
- 5) Up to a 2-year period, an onboarding programme for the students should be developed (similar to Bachelor’s level) to secure fast integration of the students in the life and practices of the department and better communication and networking among them.

Long-term recommendations

1) For a professional Master study programme with many students in full-time employment need to consider the possibility of offering the study programme also as a part-time study form.

2) In the long term there should be a more equal distribution of students in various specialisation areas especially in the areas highly demanded by the societal needs (such as educational and school psychology) and in the areas distinguishing the UL from other HEIs.

3) Review and implement workload assessments by establishing clear policies on external professional engagements of the teaching staff to ensure sustainable work conditions, prevent burnout, and maintain high teaching standards.

II - "Psychology" ASSESSMENT

II - "Psychology" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The UL's doctoral study programme "Psychology" enhances national and international competitiveness by ensuring the integration of the Latvian science and research system into the European common research area. The DSP "Psychology" makes a significant contribution to the development of the common wellbeing of the society by providing highly qualified specialists who help to promote the psycho-emotional well-being and health of the population (SAR p.133).

Additionally, the study programme plays a crucial role in developing a world-class scientific infrastructure in Latvia, strengthening the capacity for innovation and interdisciplinary research within the field of psychology.

2.1.2.

The title of the programme accurately reflects its content and purpose. It aims to train highly qualified researchers and teaching staff in the four sub-branches of psychology: general/cognitive, clinical, developmental, social/organisational psychology, who are able to develop and conduct original research, to capture and propose innovative developments relevant to the practice of psychology, and to publish the dissertation results in publications included in Web of Science, SCOPUS or other well-known international databases.

The degree to be obtained (Doctoral Degree of Science, Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Social Sciences), aims, objectives, and learning outcomes of the Doctoral Study Programme "Psychology" are interrelated. The study programme provides the opportunity for candidates to conduct independent, high-quality scientific research, contributing to the advancement of psychology in Latvia and internationally. The admission requirements for UL's Doctoral study programme "Psychology" were developed in accordance with Doctoral Council in order to provide a possibility to admit qualified applicants without prior formal training in psychology to the study programme, while improving the entrance examinations to test applicants' knowledge and understanding of the principles of psychological science and research methodology. These changes potentially will allow the study programme to broaden the pool of applicants, while diversifying the research areas and competences of the study programme students, overall increasing the development potential, quality and sustainability of the study programme. The study programme's admission requirements were modified to admit candidates without prior formal education in psychology, provided they

demonstrate sufficient knowledge of psychological science and research methodology through entrance examinations (SAR pp. 130-132). However, the specific academic requirements for students without prior formal education in psychology are not clearly outlined. Best practices across Europe suggest that interdisciplinary applicants should have structured preparatory coursework in psychological science and research methodology, which is currently not clearly defined in the programme.

The duration of the study programme is three study years (6 semesters) in full time form. However, the study programme's volume of studies is not in full compliance with the legal regulations regarding ECTS credit limits. The UL has explained that the study period spans 48 weeks per year, resulting in a total study workload of 72 ECTS per year. Nevertheless, the maximum permissible ECTS credits per year according to the Law on Higher Education Institutions is 60-66 ECTS. The study programme is organised as a three-year full-time study programme. The current structure of the doctoral study programme does not adequately reflect the reality that many doctoral students work full-time outside the university. In the appendix (See 16_pielikums_studentu skaitis_DSP.docx), UL indicates that financial difficulties are the main reason for discontinuation of doctoral studies. Doctoral studies are often time-consuming and require full-time involvement, which limits opportunities to earn a living. If scholarships or other sources of funding are insufficient, students may feel forced to abandon their studies in order to focus on financial stability. Given the fact that the majority of doctoral students work full-time outside the university, it is not realistic to complete the study programme in three years without the possibility of part-time study, which usually offers the opportunity to extend the duration of the study programme. This is not the case in other European universities either.

The programme is offered in Latvian and is planned to be offered also in English language. The study programme enhances PhD students' research skills, including methodology, data analysis, and academic writing, which are essential in academic and professional work, thus making graduates competitive in both local and international job markets. Thus the study programme's implementation languages are reasonable and justified.

2.1.3.

Significant changes in the study programme have been made in relation with the Cabinet of Ministers' amendments No 522, 14.08.2018 "Amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No 1001 of 27 December 2005 "Procedures and Criteria for Awarding of Doctoral Degree (Doctoral Dissertation)", which stipulates that from Latvian Doctoral Dissertation Councils will not award a doctoral degree in a given field, for example, in the case of this this programme until now a doctoral degree in psychology - dr.psych - was awarded, but those who defended their thesis will receive a PhD degree (SAR p. 131).

The changes in the study programme's parameters were also made in the relationship with reform of Latvian credit point system to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), corresponding with the transitional provisions of Paragraph 93 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, by the order "On Changes in the Study Credit Point Accounting System in the University of Latvia" (the UL 31.01.2024. Order No. 1-4/45), beginning with the Autumn semester of 2024, it is determined that for doctoral (third-cycle) study programmes 1 ECTS credit point corresponds to a 25-27 hour study amount of work, determining the number of contact hours according to the achievable learning outcomes. The amount of the study programme has been substantially changed - from 144 to 216 (SAR p. 129, 132) as a result of transition to ECTS.

The course content has also been slightly modified. The number of CPs in the courses PsychD002 Doctoral Dissertation in Psychology II (Approbation methods in the pilot study) and PsychD005 Doctoral Dissertation in Psychology V (Presentation of the study results in international scientific conference) has been reduced by 1 CP and now amounts to 6 ECTS. In contrast, the number of CPs for PsychD004 Doctoral Dissertation in Psychology IV (Defended empirical part of the dissertation) and PsychD006 Doctoral Dissertation in Psychology VI (Scientific article about the results of the study) has been increased by 1 CP and they are now 6 ECTS courses.

The admission requirements have been also modified in accordance with the guidelines developed by Doctoral Council. The programme provides the opportunity for candidates to conduct independent, high-quality scientific research, contributing to the advancement of psychology in Latvia and internationally. The programme's admission requirements were modified to admit candidates without prior formal education in psychology, provided they demonstrate sufficient knowledge of psychological science and research methodology through entrance examinations.

Additional changes have been made by adding English language in full time and closing part time studies.

2.1.4.

The University of Latvia Doctoral studies in Psychology implements sub-branches important for research and academic environment, which are not implemented in other higher education institutions of Latvia. Only the University of Latvia has clinical psychology, developmental psychology, and general/cognitive psychology branches in the doctoral study programme. The social/organisational psychology stream offered at the UL, is particularly in demand in the business environment.

The dynamics of the number of doctoral students (shown in SAR Annex 16) is in line with previous years, with 3-6 new doctoral students enrolled each year, ensuring the sustainability of the programme. It is reported (SAR, p. 133.) that all graduates or doctoral students are employed in the field of psychology. They are university lecturers, senior researchers, experts, self-employed counselling psychologists, clinical psychologists in healthcare settings or CBT psychotherapists. Several graduates of the UL DSP "Psychology" are working as lecturers at RSU. Several doctoral students are successfully working in the FLPP grant projects of the LSC and in the effective cooperation projects of the UL.

2.1.5. N/A

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

The title, degree, objectives, and learning outcomes are logically connected and comply with the study field. UL's doctoral study programme is created in accordance with the recommendations for development of the European Higher Education Area, including three priorities of European strategy that have been set as requirements for education: smart, sustainable, and integrating growth, to prepare highly qualified specialists – researchers and academic staff – that meet international requirements, to develop modern research and to take part in international research projects.

Strengths:

1) Sustainability and Employment Prospects. Despite a relatively small number of admissions (3-6 new doctoral students per year), the study programme maintains stability and sustainability. All graduates are reported to be employed in psychology-related fields, working as university lecturers,

senior researchers, or practitioners in various settings.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The study programme's volume of studies exceeds the legally permitted ECTS credit limits (60-66 ECTS), with students expected to complete 72 ECTS per year. While the UL justifies this by the extended study period (48 weeks per year), a formal resolution aligning with regulatory frameworks is needed.
- 2) Although the study programme allows the admission of candidates from non-psychology backgrounds, the specific academic requirements for these students are not clearly outlined.
- 3) The current structure of the doctoral study programme (only full-time studies) may not sufficiently accommodate the needs of students who work full-time, potentially contributing to extended study durations or discontinuation due to financial and time constraints.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

Doctoral study programme in psychology is a third cycle, three-year research programme. It is developed according to current developments. Study consists of Part A courses - 27 CPs, dissertation development - 150 CPs and Part B elective courses - 24 CPs. According to national regulations, the study programme should also have Part C electives, but this segment is missing.

The main aim of the study programme is to train researchers who will be able to carry out high quality research and/or teaching in an academic environment (SAR, p. 135). In a national context, there is still a significant intake of PhD graduates in academic and research institutions, while society still employs a relatively small percentage of PhD holders. An important role of doctoral graduates is to develop the field.

The intake of new doctoral students is extremely broad, and while, for example, the prerequisite for Master's students is a Bachelor's degree in psychology, potential doctoral students may have previous training in a wide range of other scientific fields, with no experience of psychology at all. Although openness and interdisciplinarity are highly valued, this level of openness needs to be re-examined. The curriculum should have clear prerequisites for new doctoral students and/or compensatory courses to be taken before the actual start of the doctoral training process. In addition, a requirement and/or criterion to be evaluated in the selection of doctoral students to have a published paper in the field is not realistic and possible (especially if some come from a completely different area of research); no more realistic is the expectation that someone from e.g. astronomy will come with a research proposal, the topic of his or her research. UL claims to have individual course content, but this is quite vaguely defined, not sufficiently structured and not sufficiently transparent for any of the stakeholders, including the study programme itself.

The curriculum of the doctoral study programme is organised around courses in theory and research methodology, which are designed to prepare young researchers to conduct research more independently and to acquire skills in research design, data collection, analysis and, finally, publication. Discussion groups are organised within the different subfields and doctoral students have the opportunity to work with their supervisors. The dissertation development course helps students to prepare for the final outcome of their programme (SAR Annex 21, Annex 22). However, the programme does not offer generic courses or so-called transferable skills courses, which are considered standard for doctoral programmes and beneficial for doctoral students.

According to the new law and university regulations, doctoral training will be organised at university level and within the doctoral school. However, as this is a newly introduced concept and organisation, it is not yet sufficiently clear what the scope of responsibilities will be and how it will actually work. At the moment it is clear that generic/transferable skills are not sufficiently supported and that the role of the institution is not sufficiently developed. There is still a predominant focus on the relationship between supervisor and doctoral student, while some of the information experts collected during the site visit questioned whether all the dissertation topics are really scientific or whether some of them tend towards professional work. In some areas of psychology it is easier than in others to move from science to profession and not to do the kind of challenging research that should be the basis for a PhD.

Doctoral students are supported to attend conferences and some financial resources are offered by the UL. There is also a new possibility for some doctoral students to be employed by the university department, but it is still in a very early stage (only one doctoral student has this position) and it is still not fully transparent what are the benefits, limitations, etc. of this new possibility. Compared to the European framework for doctoral training, there is still a significant part of traditional doctoral training without the implementation of important components of the reform of doctoral training that has been implemented since 2005.

2.2.2.

The research output of academic staff has been improved since the last accreditation and the relevance of their research experience and research productivity undoubtedly contributes positively to the delivery of doctoral programmes (SAR, p. 136). They are able to transfer their experience to involve doctoral students in their research and help them to develop their own ideas and be more creative in carrying out research.

Researchers who teach and supervise in doctoral study publish relevant work in internationally recognised journals. This is undoubtedly a good way of supporting the research activities of doctoral students. Research supervisors and other academic staff involved in teaching have increased their research productivity and participation in different research projects, including more international projects. This makes it easier for doctoral students to get involved in existing projects or to be supported in creating their own research topics according to their interests and the expertise of their supervisors.

Nevertheless, during the site visit and in the light of all the documents received by the expert panel, it was noted that some staff are more involved in research, while others are more focused and connected to professional work. Sometimes there is a fine line between the two, but it is important in all aspects to maintain the research character of the doctoral study programme.

The main focus of the study programme is on social, clinical, cognitive and personality psychology, and in most cases these areas of psychology are also linked to ongoing research projects. However, it should be noted that in the SAR and during the site visit, no clear distinction was made between the research projects and the professional projects that exist in the department. This is the same slippery slope for the development of new young researchers as mentioned above.

Guest lectures from foreign institutions are a good way to expose students to new and different experiences and relevant information, and UL has put additional effort into these activities for the study programme. In addition, the study programme promotes interdisciplinarity, an approach that is particularly encouraged in the research and academic community today.

2.2.3.

As a study programme at doctoral level, in addition to the research itself, doctoral students have courses that implement different methodologies, both for teaching and for examinations (SAR, p. 137). These methodologies are aligned with the course content, objectives and defined learning outcomes. Since all academic staff involved in teaching in the other two cycles are familiar with different teaching methodologies, it is not unexpected that they also transfer their skills and knowledge of teaching methodologies to the doctoral study programme. A significant proportion of the students' work, and of the teaching itself, is done individually, in seminars and with practical work.

Doctoral students in their senior years of the study programme also take part in helping younger students with their studies, gaining additional skills in the process. As in other study programmes, there is an e-platform where all courses have their teaching materials, assignments, grades; students are supported to develop independence in their work, but at the same time to work in teams.

However, during the site visit, the expert panel learnt that due to their other commitments (jobs they have), transfers to other offices in the city, the nature of their work (e.g. conducting their research alone, not belonging to a research group), doctoral students are in fact isolated "islands" with insufficient opportunities to share experiences, exchange information, etc. Doctoral students mainly have contact with their supervisors, the frequency of which depends on their research area and the type of research they are doing. The sense of belonging to the institution or identification with other doctoral students and/or a particular research group is extremely low.

Selection and implementation of study methods are the same, for both the Latvian and English programme.

2.2.4. N/A.

2.2.5.

The doctoral study programme concludes with the defence of the doctoral thesis. The process of submitting a thesis and defending it is regulated and formalised at both national and institutional levels. The format of the thesis is twofold, either a monograph or a series of research papers published or accepted for publication in internationally recognised journals (According to the cabinet of Ministers regulation, No 1001). The study programme has established bodies for thesis evaluation and the whole process of defence. Being a small psychology society, the thesis is examined by three academics, one from a foreign institution, one from a university other than UL, and one from the UL Doctoral Committee. This composition of experts ensures a higher level of objectivity and positive critical approach (SAR, p. 139).

The degree is awarded after the defence of the thesis by the Doctoral Committee of Psychology of UL. The degree awarded is Doctor of Social Sciences and it could be awarded in four subfields: clinical psychology, general/cognitive psychology, developmental psychology and social/organisational psychology.

2.2.6.

The study programme is completed by the defence of a doctoral thesis. There is a wide range of topics covered by different subfields, and they reflect contemporary relevant issues in the field of psychology as well as general world trends in the field. For example, the topics were related to different aspects of mental health, job performance, child abuse, or topics relevant for school

psychology. Of course, some of the selected topics are particularly relevant to Latvian society and contribute to the general knowledge and understanding of various issues facing society (as examples of topics in child psychology, clinical psychology, cognitive functioning etc.). Some of the selected topics also meet the needs of the labour market and their results could be easily put into practice (such as, for example, burnout, depression symptoms, procrastination, work performance etc.).

In a brief review of some published theses and/or their abstracts, the expert panel noted that some additional attention should be paid to the formulation of the title of the thesis, as well as to be careful with the wording. These two aspects also sharpen the researcher's thoughts and sensitivity to details, which are so important for research, but also one should not overlook the fact that the title of the thesis is directly related to the content, and primarily e.g. the formulation of the research objective, hypothesis.

According to SAR, several theses have resulted in more than one paper and have been published in internationally recognised journals (SAR, p. 140).

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

Doctoral study programme Psychology is a three-year research programme that encourages interdisciplinarity and awards a PhD in four subfields. The doctoral study programme is organised around courses in theory and research methodology, but does not offer generic courses. It does not meet some national requirements. The doctoral study programme is based on the latest research developments and findings. Teaching methods appropriate to this level of the study programme are used. The process of submitting and defending a thesis is regulated and formalised at both national and institutional level, while the topics of the theses are very broad and, although they often follow and correspond to current research, more attention should be paid to precise and appropriate wording, especially in the titles of the theses.

Strengths:

- 1) Study programme is highly interdisciplinary and as such fits well with research priorities in the European and international scientific landscape.
- 2) Study programme is positively perceived by doctoral students, in particular the supervisor-doctoral student relationship.
- 3) The research activities and research productivity of their teachers and supervisors support the research of doctoral students.
- 4) Doctoral students are exposed to a variety of teaching methods and activities. These help them to develop research skills and other relevant competences.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Considering that the selection of doctoral students is one of the main identified factors for successful completion, the doctoral study programme is not selective enough and/or does not have clear criteria for balancing students from very different backgrounds.
- 2) The doctoral study programme is missing Part C - elective courses.
- 3) It is not realistic to have full-time students and only offer the option of a full-time study programme; it is hardly possible to do a research programme of good quality and be fully employed elsewhere.
- 4) The institution still plays a minimal role in the process of doctoral training (this may change with a newly established Doctoral School at UL level, but its role and relationship with doctoral study programmes at faculty/department level is still not clearly defined).

5) Generic skills are not sufficiently supported.

6) Doctoral students are not sufficiently immersed in the research institutional environment and are too often left alone; the supervisor-doctoral student model is the dominant one.

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: Partially compliant

The doctoral study programme supports the interdisciplinarity much needed in research, uses appropriate teaching and research methods, and manages a positive relationship between doctoral students and supervisors.

However, it needs to develop its curriculum further: the doctoral study programme still has a number of structural weaknesses and a low level of alignment with the European framework for doctoral training. For example, it does not offer generic or transferable skills courses, it has maintained a very traditional form of doctoral student-supervisor relationship, and the completion rate is also an issue. A particular challenge is the admission of new students from all research areas without any previous knowledge of psychology and without a structured offer of compensatory courses.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

According to the SAR (pp. 140-141), the DSP "Psychology" is well-supported by academic, scientific, informational, material, technical, and financial resources, ensuring a high-quality research and study process.

The study programme is currently housed in the Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology (FESP) at Riga, Imantas 7. līnija and Kalpaka bulvāris 4. The premises are well-equipped and suitable for doctoral-level research, though, as was mentioned by various stakeholders, space limitations exist. However, with the future relocation to the "House of Letters", students will benefit from spacious and modern learning environments, addressing current infrastructural constraints.

The UL Library plays a key role in scientific and informational provision, offering extensive printed and electronic resources. Doctoral students have access to ProQuest Ebook Central (232,799 e-books) and the PsycArticles database (220,000 full-text research articles), ensuring ample academic material for coursework, literature reviews, and dissertation research. Additionally, Latvian textbooks are purchased and made available in sufficient quantities, supporting doctoral research in both Latvian and English.

Doctoral students have access to essential research tools, including free-use computers, MS Office, SPSS, and R software, enabling data processing and statistical analysis necessary for advanced research. The Psychology Laboratory further enhances research opportunities, offering physiological measurement tools, virtual reality devices, and behavioral prevention technologies. A dedicated laboratory assistant supports doctoral students in using specialized research equipment, ensuring technical guidance and efficiency in conducting experiments.

As there are no fundamental differences in terms of specific resources to DSP, this topic is explored in more detail in Chapter 1.3 of this report (“Resources and Provision of the Study Field”).

Overall, the Doctoral Study Programme in Psychology is academically and scientifically well-supported, with modern infrastructure, extensive library resources, research facilities, and statistical tools. The planned relocation to the "House of Letters" will further enhance the learning and research environment, ensuring that doctoral students can achieve high-level research outcomes. The criterion is fully met, with a strong foundation for scientific research and doctoral training.

2.3.2.

As mentioned in SAR (pp. 141-142), the DSP “Psychology” at the UL has a strong scientific foundation, supported by collaborations within the university and with external institutions. Doctoral students benefit from interdisciplinary cooperation with the Perception and Cognitive Systems Laboratory (Faculty of Computer Science), the Faculty of Biology, and the Faculty of Business, Management, and Economics, engaging in guest lectures and joint research projects.

Beyond UL, the study programme collaborates with Riga Stradiņš University, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, and the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga. Internationally, the University of Leuven provides guest lectures and student advising, ensuring global academic exposure (SAR Annex 13).

Doctoral students are actively involved in large-scale research projects (LCS FLPP, Erasmus+). Industry collaboration is also evident, as seen in a doctoral dissertation developed with Tet on employee appraisal systems (SAR, p. 142).

2.3.3.

As stated in SAR (pp. 143-145), the DSP currently operates at a significant financial loss (-53%), indicating that its funding model is not self-sustainable under current conditions. The study programme relies on a combination of state budget grants and tuition fees, but these sources are insufficient to cover total study programme costs, requiring cross-financing from more profitable study programmes and faculty reserves.

For the 2023/2024 academic year, the state subsidy per full-time doctoral student is €5,602.8, while the tuition fee is either €2,500 or €5,000 per year, depending on the student’s funding model. The total expected budget for the study programme is €69,131 per year, while the total estimated cost is €105,726 per year, leading to a financial shortfall. The cost per student (€8,133 per year) is significantly higher than the tuition fees collected, making the study programme financially unsustainable without external support. To be cost-effective, the study programme needs a substantial increase in tuition fees and state budget subsidies, as well as an increase in student numbers to 15 (currently there are 11 LV state funded students, 1 LV for tuition fee and 1 EU/EEA/Swiss citizen for tuition fee).

To improve cost-effectiveness, the university has outlined several strategies:

- Cross-financing losses from a profitable study programme (ABSP), lifelong learning initiatives, and faculty reserves.
- Securing additional financial support from the Study Quality Improvement Fund of the UL.
- Optimizing student group formation and increasing efficiency in on-site and remote learning formats.
- Seeking increased state subsidies to better align funding with actual programme costs.

The study programme's long-term financial sustainability depends on either increasing tuition fees, securing additional state funding, or growing student enrollment numbers. However, a significant tuition fee increase, in the expert team's opinion, may reduce accessibility, particularly for domestic students.

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

The DSP "Psychology" is academically and scientifically well-supported, with modern research infrastructure, strong interdisciplinary and international collaborations, and access to extensive digital and physical library resources. Doctoral students benefit from advanced research tools, statistical software (SPSS, R), and a well-equipped Psychology Laboratory. The study programme has established cooperation with various UL faculties, national institutions, and international universities, ensuring high-quality research opportunities. However, the study programme operates at a significant financial loss, relying on cross-financing from profitable programmes and faculty reserves. The cost per student far exceeds the tuition fees collected, making financial sustainability a key challenge. The university aims to optimize student group formation, seek increased state funding, and explore tuition adjustments to improve cost-effectiveness. While the study programme provides a strong academic environment, securing long-term financial stability remains a priority for its continued development.

Strengths:

- 1) Strong interdisciplinary and international collaborations, including partnerships with UL faculties, Riga Stradiņš University, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, and the University of Leuven.
- 2) Access to advanced research infrastructure, including the Psychology Laboratory, virtual reality tools, and physiological measurement devices.
- 3) Extensive library and digital resources, with access to ProQuest Ebook Central, PsycArticles, and key statistical software (SPSS, R).
- 4) Doctoral students actively participate in large-scale research projects (LCS FLPP, Erasmus+), gaining valuable research experience.
- 5) Flexibility in study formats, with on-site and remote learning options, improving accessibility for doctoral students.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The study programme is financially unsustainable (-53% loss), requiring cross-financing from other study programmes and faculty reserves.
- 2) Tuition fees and state subsidies are insufficient to cover actual costs (€8,133 per student), limiting financial viability.
- 3) Long-term financial stability depends on increasing enrollment, securing higher state subsidies, or raising tuition fees, which may affect accessibility.

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

The resources (study provision, science provision, informative provision (including library), material and technical provision) are sufficient for the successful implementation of the PMSP "Psychology".

The finances are not balanced, the study programme currently operates at a significant financial loss (-53%), relying on cross-financing from a profitable study programme and faculty reserves.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

According to the SAR (sections 3.4.1., 3.2.2.), the qualification of the teaching staff at the doctoral study programme overall enables them to teach students in accordance with the conditions and requirements of the regulatory enactments.

According to SAR Annex 6 there are at least 8 staff members involved in teaching. All lecturers involved in the Doctoral Study Programme have a PhD degree - 4 of them have doctoral degrees in psychology and others in other fields. All involved psychology professors are also Latvian Science Council (LSC) experts in their respective sub-branch of psychology.

There is a discrepancy noted by the experts between SAR Annex 6 (information on the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study) and Head of Study field declaration (No 30 - 37/8) stating that two professors and lead researchers (No 7 and No 14 in SAR Annex 6) are involved in the implementation of the study programme. Their involvement is not correctly reflected in the Annex 6 of the SAR.

Most of the lecturers involved in the study programme work either on their own research projects or on research projects led by other high-level researchers, regularly publish in Web of Science / Scopus indexed journals, and regularly present their scientific activities at international scientific conferences. The visiting professors are also leading scientists in their respective fields with a Hirsch index greater than 25. English language proficiency is Advanced level for the teachers (C1, C2 levels according to Common European Framework of Reference for Language) as per information from the SAR Annexes 6, 7 and 9.

2.4.2.

According to the SAR (section 2.4.2.), during this accreditation period, two professors have retired (become emeritus) and were replaced by two associate professors and two professors, ensuring continuity in academic leadership and expertise within the study programme. The university has implemented a structured approach to faculty succession planning, ensuring that transitions do not negatively affect teaching quality or research supervision.

As reflected in the SAR (section 3.1.2.) DSP is the primary mechanism for training new lecturers for the development of the study field and ensuring the growth of the academic staff, both by involving doctoral students in teaching existing study courses and in the implementation of research directions, and by allowing doctoral students and degree candidates to develop new courses and develop their research interests, which after the completion of DSP allows young specialists to integrate immediately into the implementation of the study field while developing and improving their teaching and research interests and competences. It is in accordance with the UL strategic goal on ensuring the quality of academic staff. For example, Clinical and Health Psychology and Neuropsychology courses for the Master's students are taught by doctoral students.

Additionally, the involvement of two visiting professors from University of Leuven, who taught courses in cognitive psychology for a semester, demonstrates the study programme's commitment to international collaboration and maintaining high academic standards. The university also supports

professional development initiatives for the teachers, encouraging ongoing research, pedagogical training, and participation in international academic networks. These measures ensure that changes in teaching staff do not disrupt the quality of education and that the study programme continues to meet the requirements set out in regulatory enactments.

2.4.3.

According to the SAR (sections 3.4.3., 3.4.4.) in terms of the involvement of the academic staff in research projects, there is a positive dynamic in the number of projects, the amount of funding and the diversity of research topics. Both the number of projects and the amount of funding have increased significantly compared to the previous reporting period. According to the SAR (section 3.4.3.), during the reporting period, academic staff members involved in the implementation of the DSP published around 80 publications indexed in Scopus or WoS CC. There are greater opportunities observed for doctoral students to engage in research. Academic staff have publications in peer reviewed journals such as Psychology, Health & Medicine, Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, Journal of Child and Family Studies, European Journal of Developmental Psychology and others.

Academic staff are leading researchers in the government funded research projects in social and cognitive psychology, clinical and health psychology, development psychology such as:

- 2022-2023 "Assessment of competences of higher education students and their development dynamics during the study period" within the ESF project No 8.3.6.2 "Establishment and implementation of the education quality monitoring system". 8.3.6.2/17/I/001 (No. ESS2022/442);
- 2023 - 2025 LSC grant Izp-2022/1-0374 Egocentric tendencies in drivers' judgements. Individual differences and opportunities for mitigation. Project leader, leading researcher.

From data and materials provided it can be concluded that the research competence of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the DSP and their ability to engage in and add value to basic, interdisciplinary and applied research and there is a good progress compared to the previous reporting period.

2.4.4.

According to the SAR (sections 3.4.3., 3.4.3., Annex 6, Annex 7, Annex 9) during the reporting period, academic staff members involved in the implementation of the DSP published around 80 publications indexed in Scopus or WoS CC. Each member of the academic staff has publications (SAR, Annex 9). Compared to the previous reporting periods, the number of publications has increased and the number of articles published in Q1 and Q2 journals as well. It can be concluded that it is a positive development and there is an increase in the quality of publications. Academic staff have publications in peer reviewed journals such as Psychology, Health & Medicine, Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, Journal of Child and Family Studies, European Journal of Developmental Psychology and others.

A trend can be observed that publications are produced and published as part of larger research projects and co-authoring with international colleagues. In the long-term perspective high quality publications can help attract research funding.

Funding sources for research are from the UL core funding, Latvian Science Council and EU (e.g. ERASMUS) and international donors proving that the research is of societal and academic value. Research projects are of international nature and high societal and academic value in eyes of the experts in the post-pandemic and geopolitical environment such as international research initiative Global perspectives on teachers' wellbeing and mental health following the COVID-19 Pandemic (leading partners University of Warwick, UK, Tulane University, USA and Georgia State University, USA), Egocentric tendencies in drivers' judgements, Individual differences and opportunities for

mitigation, International research initiative Multi-cultural adaptation and validation of School Cultural Congruity questionnaire (leading partner University of California, USA), project leader in Latvia, "Boosting University Psychological Resilience and Wellbeing in (Post-) War Ukrainian Nation", "Adaptation and validation of the DSM-5 Personality Questionnaire in the Latvian cultural environment".

Experts note that some questionable and low quality open source article platforms have been used during the review period, such as Frontier. During the meeting with the faculty dean and Vice-rector of the UL it was mentioned that there is support for the academic staff and researchers for English language editing of the articles and as well for publication of the articles in the online open access platforms and journals.

2.4.5.

According to the SAR (section 3.4.5.), at the doctoral level cooperation between the teaching staff is fostered through discussions at doctoral seminars, meetings of the Department of Psychology, projects, scientific conferences, etc. Collaboration is promoted and strengthened both in face-to-face events and through online communication platforms. Due to teacher-student ratio students and lecturers develop a closer, more collegial relationship and a positive environment for collaboration on various projects. The teaching staff collaborate in research projects involving doctoral students and give lectures.

It was very visible to the experts during the site visit that the students do not have experience of working in the teams but mostly one-to-one with their supervisors and purely on their own for working on their thesis and research. It was noted by the doctoral students that the introductory programme is not efficient at this level (or non-existent), limiting getting to know each other and smooth communication and networking and stimulating learning from each other. To the understanding of the experts it could be solved by the activities and initiatives of the newly established UL doctoral school. Overall the staff members were rating the working environment and conditions and microclimate at the department at a good level.

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

The qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate and the composition of the staff matches legal requirements by the Law. There is a mechanism for mutual cooperation of the teaching staff in place. Each member of the academic staff in the last six years has published in peer-reviewed editions, including international editions. The research competence of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the DSP and their ability to engage in and add value to basic, interdisciplinary and applied research and there is a good progress compared to the previous reporting period.

Strengths:

- 1) English language skills for all staff is Advanced level according Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and has improved during the review period.
- 2) Visiting professors are attracted to the cognitive psychology subject area.
- 3) There is support from high level management for the academic staff and its scientific work.
- 4) There is an increase in the number and quality of scientific publications.
- 5) There is solid involvement of academic staff in research projects and there is a positive dynamic in the number of projects.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Onboarding process/ programme for Doctoral students could be improved and active participation

of the academic staff is needed at the initiatives and learning activities of the UL doctoral school.
2) Scientific articles published in paid and low quality review online journals such as Frontiers.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The academic staff involved in the implementation of the Doctoral Study Programme "Psychology" (code 51313) complies with the requirements specified in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. There is evidence in place that the academic staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme "Psychology" (code 51313) comprises no fewer than five doctorate holders, at least three of whom are experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science in the relevant branch or sub-branch of science. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements and enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of 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: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme is implemented in Latvian and English. The study course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English and that can be accessed under SAR annex_22_course_descriptions_dsp_psychology.pdf. Descriptions comply with regulations set forth in Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma includes elements associated with the state-recognised documents of higher education (Cabinet Regulations No 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko

izglītību apliecināšus dokumentus” (only in Latvian)) as evident by provided samples (SAR Annex - DIPLOMS_2024_DOKTORS_ENG.docx).

- 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

Head of study field declaration certifies that the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements specified in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. . In the implementation of the study programme eight professors and associate professors are involved. SAR Annex (Professors_DSP.docx)

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

This is identified in the SAR Annex “IZPF_29.04.2024_Apliecinājums - 5 doktori_ENG.docx”. Staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme "Psychology" (code 51313) comprises in total five doctorate holders, all of them approved by the Latvian Council of Science in the relevant branch - psychology.

- 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

This is identified in the SAR annex - IZPF_29.04.2024_Declaration_state_language.docx. It can be concluded that the state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet Regulation No. 733 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language, the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language and the State Fee for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language" (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/330669>).

- 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

This is identified in the SAR annex - IZPF_29.04.2024_Declaration_English_B2.docx. It can be concluded that the teaching staff knowledge of the English level is at least B2.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Sample of attached study agreement (SAR Annex "Study_agreements.zip") complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi" (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/152072>).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

UL has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another higher education institution if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. The agreements are specified in the SAR annexe "Agreement_student_takeover_DU_RSU.docx". It is specified that in case of discontinuation of this study programme, students are to be able to continue their studies at Daugavpils University in Doctor's study programme "Psychology".

- 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

UL 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. It is ensured based on the document "LU_17.05.2024_Rectors_declaration.docx" added to the SAR annexes pursuant to paragraph 13.4 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 795 "Regulations Regarding Licensing of Study Programmes".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Doctoral Study Programme "Psychology" of the UL corresponds to the highest level of the International Classification of Educational Programmes (ISCED) and the Classification of Education of the Republic of Latvia: Cabinet No 322 Regulations on the Classification of Education in Latvia (13 June 2017). The implementation of the Doctoral study programme is defined by: Law on Scientific Activity of the Republic of Latvia, adopted by the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia on 14 April 2005; Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 1001 "Procedures and Criteria for the Conferral of a Doctoral Degree in Science (Promotion)"; Satversme of the UL and Regulations of Doctoral Study Programmes of the University of Latvia. This is identified in the SAR Annex - 19_Normative_regulations PhD.docx

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments are evident through analysis of the requirements and documents attached to the SAR, including statements signed by the Study Field Director, the Rector, approved by the UL Senate, etc.

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

The DSP “Psychology” at the UL is designed in accordance with the European Higher Education Area’s strategic goals, focusing on smart, sustainable, and integrative growth. The study programme aims to prepare highly qualified researchers and academic staff who meet international standards, contribute to modern psychological research, and participate in international projects. It successfully meets the formal requirements for a doctoral degree in psychology, offering focused doctoral training and opportunities for intensive research. However, there are concerns about the flexibility of entry requirements for candidates from non-psychology domains, such as medicine or social sciences. Additionally, while some PhD students gain employment through research projects, most must independently fund their research activities, including publishing costs.

The three-year research programme encourages interdisciplinary approaches and awards PhDs in Social Sciences. Doctorates can specialise in four subfields of psychology. It meets all national and institutional requirements for preparing students to conduct independent research and contribute to the development of psychology, particularly at the national level. Students generally perceive the study programme positively, especially valuing the strong supervisor-student relationship. However, the selection process for doctoral candidates lacks clear criteria, particularly regarding the balance between applicants from diverse academic backgrounds. The study programme also struggles with insufficient internationalization and limited mobility opportunities for students. Furthermore, the absence of a part-time study option makes it difficult for full-time students who work elsewhere to fully engage in the study programme. Doctoral students often experience isolation due to a limited institutional role in their training, with most guidance coming solely from their supervisors. The availability of information about the study programme is also insufficient, contributing to the sense of disconnection.

From an academic and scientific standpoint, the DSP “Psychology” benefits from a modern research infrastructure, supported by interdisciplinary and international collaborations. Students have access to advanced research tools, including virtual reality applications, physiological measurement devices, and statistical software like SPSS and R. The Psychology Laboratory provides a solid foundation for empirical research, while the university library offers extensive resources through databases such as ProQuest Ebook Central and PsycArticles. However, the study programme is financially unsustainable, operating at a 53% loss due to high per-student costs that exceed tuition fees and state subsidies. Financial sustainability hinges on increasing enrollment, securing more state funding, or raising tuition fees, which could impact accessibility for prospective students.

The teaching staff involved in the doctoral study programme are well-qualified, meeting legal requirements and maintaining active participation in research projects. English language skills of teaching staff members have improved during the review period, and cognitive psychology, in particular, has benefited from the involvement of visiting professors. The number and quality of academic publications have increased, indicating positive growth in research productivity. Institutional support for academic staff is also strong, fostering further scientific engagement. Nonetheless, onboarding processes for new doctoral students need improvement, with concerns

about the study programme being somewhat siloed. Additionally, the tendency to publish in low-quality, paid journals such as Frontiers raises concerns about the perceived credibility of the study programme's research output.

In conclusion, the DSP in Psychology at UL provides a robust academic foundation and strong research opportunities, supported by modern infrastructure and interdisciplinary collaborations. However, the study programme's long-term success requires addressing issues related to candidate selection, student isolation, international mobility, financial sustainability, and publication practices. Implementing more transparent selection criteria, enhancing institutional involvement in doctoral training, and developing clearer strategies for internationalization could significantly improve the study programme's effectiveness and reputation.

Evaluation of the study programme "Psychology"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Psychology"

Short-term recommendations

1) Up to a 2-year period, strengthen cooperation with private sector companies and research institutions to secure funded research projects, dissertation grants, and applied research contracts.

2) Up to a 2-year period, ensure that student admissions are aligned with available financial resources while maintaining high research quality.

3) Up to a 2-year period, increase participation in Erasmus+ and other international doctoral mobility programmes to enhance research collaboration, external funding opportunities, and doctoral student visibility in the global research community.

4) Up to a 2-year period, revise the criteria for the selection of students. While interdisciplinarity is more than welcome, the criteria for the admission of new students need to be better defined and more transparent.

5) Up to a 2-year period, define and adequately implement the role of the institution - university - which will soon be responsible for the doctoral school and/or the faculty or department where the doctoral studies are carried out; it cannot be primarily involved in defending the thesis.

6) Up to a 2-year period, full-time vs. part-time study programmes need to be reconsidered in order to have realistic objectives regarding the duration of the study programme; this could also have a positive impact on the admission and completion rate.

7) Up to a 2-year period, ensure that the study programme's volume and duration are aligned with regulatory requirements. A formal resolution must be adopted to ensure that the study programme does not exceed 60-66 ECTS per semester while preserving the study programme's core components.

Long-term recommendations

1) Address the -53% financial deficit by seeking increased state subsidies, optimizing tuition fee structures, or expanding external research grants and funding sources.
2) Actively promote the doctoral study programme to international students, offering scholarships, partnerships, and marketing efforts to attract fee-paying students, particularly for the English-language track.
3) Assess the impact of tuition fee adjustments, ensuring they remain competitive yet financially viable, while offering clear incentives (e.g., research assistantships, grants) to attract foreign applicants.
4) To develop a good quality doctoral study programme, doctoral students need to be predominantly full-time doctoral students and engaged in research; if they work outside university, there should be an option of part-time study programme.
5) The role of the doctoral school at university level and its relationship with individual doctoral study programmes at faculties-departments needs to be clarified.
6) Transferable skills courses (e.g. Ethics in research and research integrity or Academic writing), need to be developed and become a regular part of doctoral studies.
7) The length of time needed to obtain a degree must be reduced, while the research productivity of doctoral students must be increased.
8) Review practices and guidance for the students and academic staff avoiding publishing in the questionable low quality and paid open sources platforms.

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

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Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:	Fully compliant		The Quality Assurance System and continuous improvement procedures are described in the Quality Management Handbook. The efficiency of the system was confirmed during the on-site visits via multiple representatives from the managerial structures of UL.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)	Fully compliant		The directions of scientific research are relevant for the study field. The connection of scientific research with the study process is logical and justified. Main indicators of scientific research (number of scientific publications, participation in research projects, involvement of students and academic staff, international cooperation in the research, innovations), are fully compliant.
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	Significant positive changes have been made, followed by a number of activities, agreements and collaborations, but more focus is needed on international research projects, strategically planned international collaborations and greater support for mobility, both of students and staff. Although the number of international projects has increased, there are still fewer research projects compared to the number of professional projects; it is not clear what the strategic planning of international cooperation is and they are not evenly distributed across the different areas; mobility is still sporadic, mostly short, with limited numbers of incoming students, very low number of outgoing students and overall relatively low staff mobility, including administrative staff.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
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			<p>The study field and programme management have taken the necessary steps to execute all short-term recommendations and most long-term recommendations, and the implementation plan is generally regarded as successfully completed.</p> <p>Although a centralized graduate survey has been introduced, it only started in 2023, leaving room for improvement in data collection and longitudinal analysis. While participation in conferences and Erasmus+ programmes has increased, there is still potential for more international joint research projects and publications. Although revisions to course structures were made, more work is needed to strengthen transferable skills and ensure DSP alignment with research lines.</p>

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	Psychology (43313)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent
2	Psychology (47313)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
3	Psychology (51313)	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Average

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts
