APPLICATION

Studiju virziena "Information and Communication Sciences" for assessment

Study field	*Information and Communication Sciences*
Title of the higher education institution	*Sabiedrība ar ierobežotu atbildību "ALBERTA KOLEDŽA"*
Registration code	*3347801552*
Legal address	*SKOLAS IELA 22 - 5, VIDZEMES PRIEKŠPILSĒTA, RĪGA, LV-1010*
Phone number	*67288824*
E-mail	*info@alberta-koledza.lv*

Self-evaluation report

Study field "Information and Communication Sciences"

Alberta College

Table of content

I - Information on the Higher Education Institution/College

1.1. Basic information on the higher education institution/ college and its strategic development directions, including the following information:

Alberta College (hereinafter referred to as the College) is a state-accredited institution of higher education, founded in 2001, executing first level professional higher education programs in various study directions, based on the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Chapter 2, Section 10.1, Paragraph 2.

At the moment of developing the self-assessment report, the College has four accredited study directions, and seven study programs are conducted therein:

1. The study direction "Management, administration and real estate administration" (accredited until 31.12.2020) contains the following first level professional higher education study programs:
    - "Business", with two specializations, "Small business economy and organization" and "Accounting";

- "Institution work organization and management", with the specialization "Personnel work organization";
- "Entertainment industry management and production";
- "Marketing and innovations".

2. The study direction "Information and communication sciences" (accredited until 31.12.2020) (hereinafter referred to as the SD) contains the first level professional higher education study program "Public relations" (hereinafter referred to as the SP).
3. The study direction "Law" (accredited until 31.12.2020) contains the first level professional higher education study program "Legal Regulation of Business".
4. The study direction "Information technology, computer engineering, electronics, telecommunication, computer management and computer science" (accredited until 31.12.2022) contains the first level professional higher education study program "Information technologies" with two specializations, "Programmer" and "Computer network administrator".

The College has developed the "Alberta College Development Strategy 2019-2023" (hereinafter referred to as AKAS 2023), which defines the mission, vision and motto of the College:

- Vision: in 2023, we are the most recommended Latvian college according to Latvian employers, we have more than 150 graduates per year who find well-paid jobs in their fields, as well as dare to found their own companies and strive for continuous development;
- Mission: the College provides the preparation of socially active and responsible professionals by involving existing professionals of the field and using modern teaching methods and digital solutions;
- Motto: We do everything we do in such a way and because we care what Alberta College graduates can do.

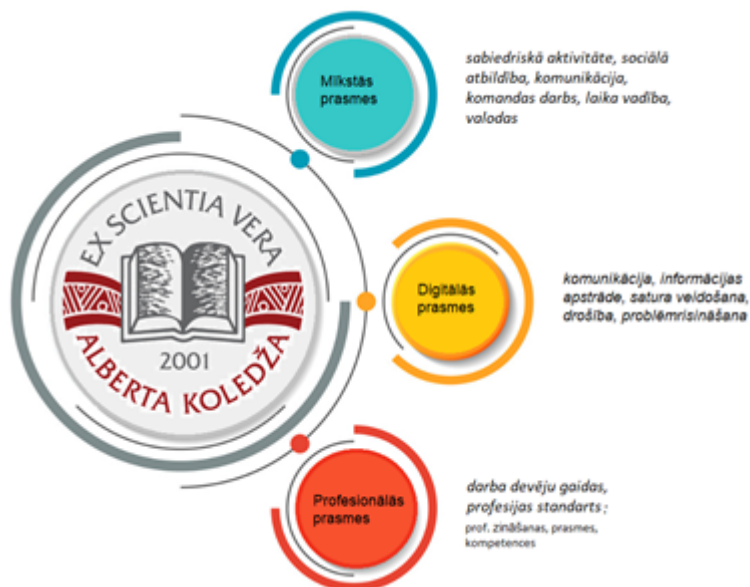AKAS 2023 defines the image of the graduate of Alberta College.

Fig. 1. The image of the graduate of Alberta College.

Soft skills: social activity, social responsibility, communication, teamwork, time management, languages.

Digital skills: Communication, information processing, content creation, security, problem solving.

Professional skills: employer expectations, professional standard (professional knowledge, skills, competencies).

AKAS 2023 defines five directions of strategic development for the next five years. Each goal has been assigned several directions of development:

1. The first goal is preparing high quality specialists fitting the current job market requirements to secure support functions for businesses and institutions, who can use their acquired knowledge and practical skills to quickly fit into the job market or continue their career growth. The following directions of development have been defined for reaching this goal:

- Study directions and the variety of programs;
- The content of study programs and the quality of studies.

2. The second goal is providing an efficient study process by applying a student-centered approach, using modern teaching methods, supporting applied research, creative activity and strengthening practical skills, as well as the opportunity to gain international experience while studying. The following directions of development have been defined for reaching this goal:

- A student-centered approach;
- Teaching methods and creative activity;
- Material and technical basis;
- Internationalization.

3. The third goal is providing a professional team of academic professionals to implement the study process, who base the quality of study programs and the execution of the study process in science and research, practical industry experience, as well as close cooperation with employers and strategic partner schools. The following directions of development have been defined for reaching this goal:

- Personnel;

- Science and research activity;
- Cooperation with employers;
- Collaboration with other schools.

4. The fourth goal is ensuring the efficient management and steady development of the College. The following directions of development have been defined for reaching this goal:

- Management and administration;
- Involvement of students.

5. The fifth goal is being an open and dynamic college, flexible towards market trends and forthcoming towards various educational needs of Latvian residents and nationals abroad. The following direction of development has been defined for reaching this goal:

- Image and public activities.

All of the strategic goals and priorities are in line with state policies and state strategic planning documents, the tasks implied by AKAS2023 have been mapped in comparison with tasks stated in state-level documents.

In the period between 2013 and 2019, the number of students has fluctuated, which is related to a demographic crisis in the country, the number of high-school graduates leaving the country and continuing their studies abroad, the unstable financial situation of the population (financial crisis), fluctuations in global and local professional demand trends, as well as young people's indecisiveness regarding a specific profession.

See the changes in the numbers of enrolled and graduated students over the reporting period in Annex 26.

See AKAS 2023 in Annex 1.

1.2. Description of the management of the higher education institution/ college, the main institutions involved in the decision-making process, their composition (percentage depending on the position, for instance, the academic staff, administrative staff members, students), and the powers of these institutions.

The administration of the study direction is organized based on the College internal document "Administration Structure of Alberta College". (*See Annex 2*).

The administration of the study direction involves the administrative staff (incl. general and support staff) and academic staff (incl. guest lecturers), students, employers' representatives (incl. graduates), in order to ensure the overall functions of the College (see below) and a high-level execution of each study direction and study program (*see Section II.1.1.4*).

This section provides an outline of the scope of authority and composition of the head management and decision-making bodies, whereas *Section II.1.1.4* gives a more detailed explanation of the functions of the heads of study directions, study program directors, methodological commissions of the direction, general and support staff, as well as their responsibilities within the administration, implementation and development of the study direction.

In compliance with College Statutes and Cabinet Regulations No. 537 "Alberta College Regulations" of 7 August 2007 (hereinafter referred to as the College Regulations, *see Annex 1*). The Board is the

highest administrative institution of the College and the decision-making body for strategic, financial and economic matters. Therefore, the College Board is formed of three Board Members, whose functions are divided into three areas of functional responsibility:

1: the study process, science and creative activities, HR;

2: financial administration, organizing accounting;

3: economic activities, communication.

According to the values of the College, especially openness and reliability, cooperation and support, and considering the declarations in the Quality Assurance Policy of the College, it is crucial for the College that program development actively involves its management, personnel, students and partners. Based on such Quality Assurance Policy framework principles as social and legal responsibility, leadership and involvement, efficiency and result-orientation, regular internal and cyclic external assessment within the College practice, the College Board develops strategic documents and makes decisions with the support of the Development Council. The Development Council is not a continuously existing institution, but it is instead created *ad hoc* by inviting the College Director, heads of study directions, study program directors, students, graduates, partners, or external experts, various institutions, staff or partners, considering the matter at hand.

For example, the development of AKAS 2023 was ensured by the Board with the active involvement of College personnel, partners, especially actively involving the Director for defining strategic goals, as well as heads of study directions for determining tasks, as well as staff and students for the creation of the mission, vision, image of a graduate, specifying values, performing the SWOT analysis, the management of the University College of Economics and Culture (hereinafter referred to as the UCEC) for the strengthening of strategic partnership, and an external expert for the assessment of the compliance of AKAS 2023 with national level strategic documents. Prior to its approval, the draft of AKAS 2023 was discussed with the staff at a general meeting and Council meeting. Taking into account the comments of the parties involved, the draft was improved and then approved by the Board.

The College Board actively cooperates with the Alberta College Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council) and the director of Alberta College (hereinafter referred to as the College Director), as well as the Students' Self-government Council, by exchanging information, consulting and coordinating various decisions,

In compliance with College Regulations and Regulations on Alberta College Council (*see Annex 1*), the general meeting (hereinafter referred to as the General Meeting), i.e., the meeting of academic, administrative staff and delegated representatives of the Students' Self-government Council; elect the Council, take part in discussions of strategic documents, hear out the annual report of the College Director on achievements and plans. The extended General Meeting (i.e., including the Board, guest lecturers and partners) is called at least twice a year (at the end of the academic year and before the beginning of each academic year), and the General Meeting is additionally called for electing a Council, discussing pressing matters or celebrating significant dates at a celebratory General Meeting.

Pursuant to College Regulations and Regulations on Alberta College Council, the Council suggest and approve new study directions, approve study programs, approve development strategies of study directions and study programs by monitoring their compliance with Latvian and European Union standards and strategic documents, as well as the compliance with strategic documents of Alberta College; approve descriptions of the contents and implementation of study programs, as well as changes in study programs, review and approve yearly study direction and study program self-assessment reports, approve questions of state final examinations and topics of qualification

papers, approve sample topics of term papers and qualification papers, approve practice tasks, elect academic staff, approve the structure and composition of methodological commissions, approve research and science activity directions, prepare recommendations regarding the admission of students and implementation of new study programs, accept the yearly report on the activities of the College, support and encourage the functioning of the Students' Self-government Council, develop College Regulations and amendments thereof, make decisions on other matters that are within the Council's competence under the aforementioned regulations.

The Council is comprised of 12 Council members: a Director, one Board Member, four academic staff representatives (persons elected into academic positions), two representatives of general staff, two representatives of the Students' Self-government Council, two authorized representatives delegated by employers and non-governmental organizations according to the specifics of the study programs.

The representatives of the elected academic and administrative staff are elected at the General Meeting, the representative of the Students' Self-government Council is elected by the Students' Self-government Council and included in the Council pursuant to a decision of the Chairperson of the College Students' Self-government Council without an election.

Pursuant to College Regulations, the College Director performs the following functions and is responsible for the activities of the College: carries out the administrative and economic management of the College and is the official representative of the College in all related matters, is responsible for the implementation and fulfillment of the College Development Strategy (AKAS), for the organization and development of the study process and methodological work, for the provision and development of research and creative activities as well as international cooperation, for the selection, assessment and development of staff; they participate in the development, harmonization and approval of the College budget; they ensure the development, implementation and control of the College action plan (AP); monitor all processes taking place within the College, ensure the control of the functioning of the internal quality assurance system; make decisions on the rational use of College resources, organize the preparation and submission of reports, as well as other tasks.

Pursuant to Regulations on the Students' Self-government Council (*see Annex 1*), the Students' Self-government Council take part in General Meetings, activities of the Council, methodological and ethical commissions, participate in the development of strategic documents of the College, assess the study process and work of teachers and administration; develop recommendations for improving the functioning of the College; inform students of their rights; take part in the work of commissions in the event of assessment or appeal of actual actions, as well as participate in the Ethics Commission, organize and take part in entertainment events; cooperate with self-government councils of other schools and colleges, incl. ensuring representation in the Latvian College Association.

The work of the Students' Self-government Council is organized by the Chairperson of Students' Self-government Council elected at the general meeting of the students (carrier of the honorary title "Alberts").

See a list of the main internal regulations of the College in Annex 1.

See the administration structure of the College in Annex 2.

1.3. Description of the mechanism for the implementation of the quality policy and the procedures for the assurance of the quality of higher education, as well as the

stakeholders involved in the development and improvement of the quality assurance system and their role in these processes.

The implementation mechanism of the College quality policy is based on the following pillars:

- Quality Assurance Policy – general principles and guidelines;
- Foundation of College activities – description of areas of responsibility and all processes (goal, process, persons in charge, terms);
- "Business Calendar" online tool – all cyclic processes – tasks for each position with start and end terms and control mechanisms.

Within regular internal assessments, the following procedures are organized at the College for ensuring the quality of higher education:

1. **The content of the study program and the study environment**

- Student survey about the implementation, administration of the study program and the work of the study program director and each teacher – each semester;
- Student survey about the AC and e-environment – once a year
- Graduate survey upon graduation – each semester;
- Employer survey each semester for all internship providers;
- Employer focus groups – upon necessity when performing an assessment of study program contents;
- Meetings of methodological commissions – at least once a month;
- Meetings of study program directors – 2-3 times per semester;
- Analysis of assessment results – twice a year;
- Analysis of drop-out rates and main causes – once a year.

2. **Staff assessment and improvement of methodological work**

- Staff survey on work satisfaction and improvement of AC work – each year
- Staff evaluation – each year in the summer;
- Staff development interviews and a plan for individual qualification growth – each year, following the assessment;
- Professional improvement of the staff – teaching methodological conference each year, methodological seminars and conferences;
- Promotion of the staff image – training plan (incl. for the promotion of digital skills and raising the level of foreign language skills), inspirational lectures, summer schools.

3. **Science and research activities**

- Reviewing news in the fields and research topics – in collaboration with representatives of academic staff and employers;
- Forming research groups of study directions – collaboration among representatives of the academic staff of several directions, an employer representative and, when possible, an international partner;
- The work of the study direction research group in collaboration with students – the integration of the science and research paper into the study process;
- Development of science publications and participation in international scientific and practical conferences, and publishing the publications in international citable science journals;
- Students' international scientific and practical conference – each year;
- Business forum – in cooperation with employers, at least once in two years;

- International scientific and practical conference – in cooperation with a strategic partner, each year;
- Business game – at least once in two years.

4. **Control of truthfulness of information and updates**

- Website – features up-to-date information about trending topics at the College, news on the study process or changes in study directions or study programs;
- E-environment – active auditing of all active e-courses, checking if study course descriptions, learning requirements for the study course, deadlines, descriptions of individual tasks, etc., have been updated;
- Social media – promoting the recognizability of the College and the good public image of the College among high-school graduates and employers, publishing news both on College events and the opportunities for current students to take part in conferences, competitions, etc.

5. **Graduates' accomplishments**

- Graduate survey (large) – once in 3-4 years so far; each year according to AKAS 2023;
- Graduate survey (small) – once a semester;
- Guest lectures by graduates – implemented upon possibility depending on the responses of graduates;
- Graduates' work in defense committees, reviewing papers – implemented upon possibility depending on the responses of graduates;

6. **Facilities and library**

- Inventory of available resources, preparing a renewal plan thereof – once a year;
- Reviewing the necessity of purchasing new resources, investment plan – once a year;
- Supplementing the library assortment – at least once a year.

7. **Finances**

- Development of the budget and controlling its fulfillment – at least once a year;
- Revision of the archive.

8. **Annual assessment and data analysis results**

- Decision-making regarding the necessity of process improvement;
- Development of an action plan, determining specific activities with positions and deadlines;
- Informing the involved parties.

Quality will be ensured if the goals are achieved. This is possible if everyone is aware of their role and knows their basic responsibilities:

Board – the highest administrative institution of the College and the decision-making body for strategic, financial and economic matters:

- determine the key principles of the quality policy,
- coordinate the development and improvement of the quality policy,
- approve the final version of the document and ensure supervision.

Director – is responsible for the activities of the College and carries out the administrative and economic management of the College, and is the official representative of the College in all related matters:

- participates in the development and improvement of the quality policy,

- is responsible for and ensures the implementation and supervision of the quality policy, initiates the improvement of the quality policy in collaboration with the parties involved.

Council – elected at the general meeting, the higher management institution and decision-making body on matters outside the scope of the Board:

- ensure the supervision of the quality policy, initiate its improvement in collaboration with the parties involved;
- approve internal regulations, study direction self-assessment reports and study program changes, carry out the assessment of administrative and academic staff,
- provide suggestions for the improvement of Alberta College.

Student Council – a student-elected institution representing student interests:

- get involved in the development and improvement of the quality policy,
- participate in College general meetings, the work of the Council methodological commissions and ethical commissions, participate in the development of strategic College documents,
- provide feedback: assess the study process, the work of teachers and the administration, the study environment, program content, develop suggestions for the improvement of Alberta College functions,
- inform students of their rights, collaborate with graduates, student councils of other schools and colleges, incl. representation in the Latvian College Association.

Ethical Commission – a commission created by the Director to review violations of the norms of the Ethical and Academic Integrity Code, prove them, make decisions on applying sanctions:

- get involved in the implementation of the quality policy,
- provide suggestions for the improvement of the Ethical and Academic Integrity Code.

Head of the Career and Learning Center – develops the strategy of the Career and Learning Development Strategy and plan of action, organizes its implementation:

- gets involved in the development, implementation and improvement of the quality policy,
- participates in the development of the College Development Strategy and plan of action, implements various projects and provides suggestions for the promotion of student and staff careers,
- promotes collaboration with employers, business incubators and other educational institutions.

Methodological Commission – a collegiate institution of the study direction that assess the study process, study program content and implementation, and provide suggestions for their improvement:

- get involved in the development and improvement of the quality policy,
- provide feedback: assess the study process, the work of the administration, the study environment, study program content, develop recommendations for the improvement of College functions, material and technical resources and study programs,
- promote cooperation with the Student Council and employers.

Head of the Study Direction –responsible for the development of the study direction, the qualification improvement of study program directors and academic staff, implementation of study programs in compliance with the requirements of laws and regulations:

- gets involved in the development and improvement of the quality policy, ensures the implementation of the policy,
- participates in the development of the College Development Strategy and plan of action,

develops the study direction development strategy and action plan, carries out an annual self-assessment of the study direction and initiates necessary changes;

- coordinates the assessment of academic staff and organizes annual development interviews, develops recommendations for the improvement of staff functions,
- coordinates research activity, ensuring compliance with the development strategy for scientific activity,
- promotes collaboration with employers, graduates and other educational institutions,
- coordinates the updating of the material and technical resources according to the needs of the study direction in Latvia and abroad.

Study Program Director – responsible for the development of the study program, updating study program content and implementation of the study program according to the requirements of laws and regulations, promotes collaboration with employers, graduates and other educational institutions:

- gets involved in the development, implementation and improvement of the quality policy,
- participates in the development of the College Development Strategy and plan of action, as well as the development of the study direction development strategy and action plan, carries out the self-assessment of the study direction, implements necessary changes for the improvement of the quality of the study program, provides recommendations for the improvement of College functions,
- coordinates research activity within the study program,
- provides recommendations for the expansion and updating of material and technical resources according to the needs of the study program,
- promotes collaboration with employers, graduates and other educational institutions in Latvia and abroad.

Internship Supervisor – ensures the implementation of study program internships according to the requirements of internal and external regulations:

- cooperates with the academic staff of the College and employers in improving the quality of the study program, participates in the preparation of the study program self-assessment, provides recommendations for the improvement of College functions.

Academic staff:

- get involved in the development, implementation and improvement of the quality policy,
- attend general meetings, participate in the Council, participate in the work of methodological commissions, improvement of study programs, development of strategic College documents and new study programs,
- observe a student-centered approach to the study process,
- raise their qualification, carry out scientific and research activities, actively involve College students, participate in staff assessment at the end of each study year,
- evaluate the content of the study program and study courses, the study process, the work of the administration, the College environment, share their opinions in surveys, personally address the administration with complaints and suggestions, participate in the preparation of the study program self-assessment report.

Students:

- get involved in the improvement of the quality policy,
- attend general meetings, participate in the Council, methodological commissions, the Student Council,
- provide feedback: assess the study process and study course contents, the study process,

the work of academic and administration staff, the College environment, share their opinions in surveys, personally address the administration with complaints and suggestions.

Educational Methodologist and Study Program Secretaries – organize the planning of the class schedule, examination period and consultations, organize records, provide information to prospective students, students, graduates and staff, reply e-mail queries:

- get involved in the development, implementation and improvement of the quality policy,
- attend general meetings, participate in the Council,
- assess College processes, the work of administration staff, the College environment, share their opinions in surveys, personally address the administration with complaints and suggestions for the improvement of College functions.

E-Coordinator – carries out internal administrative coordination for organizing, improving, developing and proper function of the e-environment:

- gets involved in the development, implementation and improvement of the quality policy,
- attends general meetings, participates in the Council,
- manages online systems (incl. Nexus, E-Nexus, business calendar, Moodle with integrated Big Blue Button, Main Folder, website, etc.), the principles of their organization and maintenance, continuously learning the possibilities and news on the usage of these systems, providing recommendations to the management regarding opportunities for improvement and development,
- develops various templates, audits Moodle e-courses, controls the observance of e-course development standards and principles, their quality and compliance with deadlines,
- gives reports to the management on progress and development opportunities, prepares various reports, etc., collects, prepares, analyzes and submits statistical and other current data,
- develops and improves written and video instructions for staff and students, prepares infographics, develops manuals, templates, participates in the development of regulations,
- participates in the implementation of new processes related to the e-environment, controls the implementation and maintenance of a quality assessment system.

Head of the Business Incubator – creates the Business Incubator function program and plan of activities, involves mentors, promotes collaboration with other business incubators and their participants**:**

- gets involved in the implementation and improvement of the quality policy,
- provides reports to the management regarding student progress, activities of the Business Incubator and its opportunities for development, prepares various reports,
- personally addresses the administration with complaints and suggestions for the improvement of College functions.

Erasmus Coordinator – prepares funding applications and reports for student and teacher mobility, promotes involvement in mobility programs, provides informational support, involves foreign partners:

- gets involved in the development, implementation and improvement of the quality policy,
- provides reports to the management regarding progress and opportunities for development, prepares various reports,
- assesses College processes, the work of administration staff, the College environment, shares their opinions in surveys, personally addresses the administration with complaints and suggestions for the improvement of College functions.

Librarian – informs students and academic staff on news, provides consultations on using the library and searching for resources in the libraries of Alberta College, University College of Economics and Culture, and others:

- gets involved in the development, implementation and improvement of the quality policy,
- participates in general meetings, assesses College processes, the work of administration staff, the College environment, shares their opinions in surveys, personally addresses the administration with complaints and suggestions for the improvement of College functions.

Head of Communication Projects – informs the parties involved, ensures the preparation of current information and posting on the College website and social media:

- gets involved in the development, implementation and improvement of the quality policy,
- participates in general meetings, assesses College processes, the work of administration staff, the College environment, shares their opinions in surveys, personally addresses the administration with complaints and suggestions for the improvement of College functions.

Financial Department – ensure accounting in compliance with the requirements of laws and regulations, control and predict financial resources of the College, participate in developing the budget of the College, provide recommendations for the optimization of financial resources and availability of development investments:

- get involved in the development, implementation and improvement of the quality policy,
- participate in general meetings, assesses College processes, the work of administration staff, the College environment, share their opinions in surveys, personally address the administration with complaints and suggestions for the improvement of College functions.

IT Department – ensure the functioning, security and updating of the information and communication systems and technologies:

- get involved in the development, implementation and improvement of the quality policy,
- participate in general meetings, assesses College processes, the work of administration staff, the College environment, share their opinions in surveys, personally address the administration with complaints and suggestions for the improvement of College functions.

Lawyer – develops internal regulations, informs on the amendments to external laws and regulations, prepares legal documents, participates in the improvement and maintenance of the personal data protection system for physical persons:

- gets involved in the development, implementation and improvement of the quality policy,
- participates in general meetings, assesses College processes, the work of administration staff, the College environment, shares their opinions in surveys, personally addresses the administration with complaints and suggestions for the improvement of College functions.

Technical Department – ensure facility adequacy for the study process in compliance with sanitary and health and safety requirements, provide necessary resources for the work of the staff:

- get involved in the implementation and improvement of the quality policy,
- participate in general meetings, assesses College processes, the work of administration staff, the College environment, share their opinions in surveys, personally address the administration with complaints and suggestions for the improvement of College functions.

Employers, industry associations, graduates, partners:

- get involved in the development and improvement of the quality policy,
- participate in the development, assessment, updating and improvement of strategic College

documents,

- provide support in determining research directions, participate in research,
- assess study program and study course content, share their opinions in surveys, participate in focus groups, give individual suggestions, provide expert opinions,
- provide social support by ensuring guest lectures, hosting students at their organizations within teaching trips and internships, get involved in the work of defense commissions, participate in the Business Incubator as mentors, participate in the Business Forum of the College, co-fund the purchase of necessary hardware, software, etc., offer study stipends and grants.

An assessment of the study direction development plan for the following six years and the drafting process of the development plan is available in Part II, Section 1.2 of this Self-Assessment Report, "Goals of the study direction and their compliance with the field of activity of the College, directions of strategic development, needs of social and economic development and development trends", and the following Section 1.3.

See electronic link to the site where the College Quality Policy and other binding regulations are available, in Annex 1.

1.4. Fill in the table on the compliance of the internal quality assurance system of the higher education institution/ college with the provisions of Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education by providing a justification for the given statement. In addition, it is also possible to refer to the respective chapter of the Self-Assessment Report, where the provided information serves as evidence for the full compliance, partial compliance or non-compliance.

1.	The higher education institution/ college has established a policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education.	Complies
		The College has developed and implemented Alberta College Quality Assurance Policy, the Foundation of Alberta College activities (which are connected to the e-solution "Business Calendar"), as well as developed and implemented the Alberta College Development Strategy, Development Strategy for Each Study Direction, Scientific Research and Creative Development Strategy, Academic Staff Development Plan, and other documents. At the beginning of each study year, strategy implementation plans are developed, and the fulfillment of such plans is analyzed at the end of each year according to preset criteria, adjustments of future plans or strategy revisions are done. See additional examples in Part II, Section 1.3, "SWOT analysis of the study direction. Development plan of the study direction, the development process thereof".

2.	A mechanism for the creation 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.	Complies
		The College has developed a Quality Assurance Policy as well as Regulation of Alberta College on Curriculum Development, Implementation Supervision and Improvement, which provide for an annual assessment of study programs involving teachers, employers and partners. Specific procedures and persons in charge are defined. Each year, a description of the contents and implementation of a study program is developed, integrating all necessary changes for the improvement and updating of the study program, it is reviewed and approved by the Council. See additional examples in Part II, Section 2.2, "The development, review system and processes of a study program. Mechanism for obtaining and giving feedback".
3.	The criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of students' results, which enable reassurance of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, have been developed and made public.	Complies
		The College has developed the Regulation on the Procedure of Studies and Examinations, which addresses the general principles of evaluations and defines procedures. Each study program has an implemented study course, within which students are informed of the planned results of the study program and the general image of an Alberta College graduate. Each study course is given a Study Course Description, which clearly formulates the planned achievable results of the study course (knowledge, skills, competencies) and evaluation criteria for each result. Study Course Descriptions are published on Moodle and are always available to students acquiring the respective study course. Each year, results set forth by Study Course Descriptions are assessed at methodological commission meetings, discussing whether they have been met, whether they are achievable and whether there is a need to improve the Study Course Descriptions to specify definitions of results or evaluation criteria. See additional examples in Part II, Section 1.6, "Methods and procedures used in the assessment of student achievements".

4.	Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality have been developed.	Complies
		Alberta College has developed and implemented the Academic Staff Development Plan (which, among other things, includes a precisely formulated image of academic staff at Alberta College), and a Staff Assessment and Motivation System. The staff was involved in the development and implementation of the system. The budget provides for funding for raising the qualification of academic staff. See additional examples Part III, Section 3.5., "Qualification and work quality of academic staff".
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.	Complies
		Alberta College has implemented information and data accumulation systems, incl. Nexus (student database), e-Nexus (staff database), GM (document database), etc. The e-solution "Nexus" accumulates information about student results, incl. showing average group results, which allows to make comparative analysis. Data are discussed during meetings of methodological commissions and with the state final examination commission, as well as during study program director meetings in order to do an interdirectional comparative analysis. Each year, the College conducts student surveys and a graduate survey about satisfaction with the study program, the study process, growth and employment. The College has implemented an analysis of the drop-out indicator and a system for drop-out minimizing. Academic and administrative staff are assessed each year. Available and necessary resources are assess each year, recommendations are submitted to the Director, information is handed over to the Board after approval by the Director. Since 2018, data of at least the last 3 years must be analyzed, preferably 5 years (previously a 2 year analysis). All obtained data are accumulated in College databases and analyzed by preparing annual self-assessment reports. See additional examples Part II, Section 2.6, "Student, graduate and employer survey results".

6.	The higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their quality assurance systems.	Complies
		See all previous table points, as well as the Alberta College Quality Assurance Policy, the Alberta College Development Strategy, the Study Direction Development Strategy, the Scientific Research and Creative Development Strategy, Academic Staff Development Plan, and other documents.

II - Description of the Study Direction (1. Management of the Study Direction)

1.1. Economic and/or social grounds for the creation of the study direction and the relevant study programmes, the assessment of the interrelation among the study programmes, as well as the analysis of the significance (singularity) of the study programmes in comparison with other similar study programmes in Latvia and abroad.

After graduating from a program in information and communication sciences, the student obtains an academic or professional bachelor's degree, however, it is possible to obtain a lower professional qualification, e.g., in public relations, in a much shorter time (within two to two and a half years) in first level professional higher education study programs. Moreover, after graduating from the first level professional higher education study program, with an already obtained professional "public relations specialist" qualification, it is possible to continue one's studies in bachelor's programs at later stages of studies. Obtaining a professional qualification faster and learning basic public relations is also important for students who need an education or knowledge of the industry to fulfill their professional duties.

The "Public Relations" study program implemented at Alberta College is the only first level higher professional education study program in Latvia offering to obtain the qualification of a public relations specialist. The program is based on classic values of public relations and creating an understanding thereof, supplemented by modern industry trends.

As mentioned in the professional standard for public relations specialists, updated and approved in 2019, "a public relations specialist ensures the organizations' internal and external communication using various methods and instruments of public relations; they create and maintain collaboration with representatives of mass media and online media influencers, organize events for internal and external target audiences of the organization. They use multimedia and modern technologies in their work, they apply principles and tools of digital communication in fulfilling their duties; they work independently and coordinate their activities with their direct supervisor".

The SP is intended for the part of society who, after obtaining a secondary or higher education, feel the need for a modern professional education that meets European standards and requirements. In a short period, Alberta College prepares professional employees who gain practical skills during the study process and are competitive in modern-day market conditions. The Latvian job market is experiencing a growing demand for specialists who are not only qualified in a specific profession, specializing in their respective industry, but who also have additional extensive knowledge in communication and public relations.

According to data from cv.lv as of 02.01.2020, Section "Media/ Public Relations" has 33 active vacancies, of which 21 vacancies are related to various aspects of public relations and marketing communication. Therefore, graduates with a qualification of public relations specialist are in very high demand both in the public and the private sectors.

The SP differs from other first level professional higher education study programs due to:

- a unique study program in Latvia;
- s study courses meeting the current standard of the public relations specialist profession;
- a unique form of studies (see more below);
- a strategic partnership with implementers of higher-level study programs, incl. UCEC;
- active cooperation with employers.

Upon graduating from the Alberta College study program "Public Relations", the new public relations specialist is prepared for the job market and is familiar with the main areas of the industry, and can also apply the key instruments of public relations in practice. They have also acquired study courses covering the most current global industry trends, which creates an additional opportunity to choose the most appropriate field and work in businesses, public administration, or non-governmental organizations that implement and are in need of a public relations functionality.

In comparison with other similar study programs in Latvia (bachelor level) and abroad, in addition to the College providing the acquisition of the study program onsite, the College also offers a unique type of studies to its students – e-learning onsite, which is comparable to the onsite form, but takes place online. It is a unique system and methodology developed at the College, which only the College is implementing in first level professional higher education programs. This experience is being assimilated by the College's strategic partner, UCEC, in order to provide graduates of the College with the opportunity to continue their studies in a bachelor's programs in a similar form.

E-learning features:

- the same study results, goals, tasks;
- online lectures, meaning *live* contact with the lecturer;
- individual consultations online or at College premises;
- group work, seminars, discussions, presentations.

A more detailed description of e-learning is available in the Regulations "Alberta College Procedure of Organizing E-learning" (*See Annex 1*).

1.2. Aims of the study direction and their compliance with the scope of activities of the higher education institution/ college, the strategic development directions, as well as the needs and the development trends of the society and the national economy.

As a private college where students choose their studies with their own funding, the College has directed its strategic specialization early on for the preparation of specialists for business (which is included in the mission and vision of the College): organizing the work and support staff of small and medium enterprises – HR management, PR, marketing, IT, etc. Knowledge of public relations is necessary in order to provide and promote communication, visibility and reputation of businesses or public persons. Prior to opening the study program, several requests were heard, interest from College graduates and partners about its implementation. Since opening the study program, the

College continues to implement this program, admitting students and following current trends in the field each year.

The aim of the study direction "Information and Communication Sciences" is to provide the preparation of qualified, socially active and responsible communication specialists who can successfully integrate into the job market and are oriented towards further education.

The aim of the SD corresponds with the strategic development directions, mission and vision of the College, which are stated in AKAS 2023.

The following study results are defined for the SD:

- Know broad facts and specialized facts appropriate for the professional area, as well as theories, regularities and technologies corresponding with the fourth (EQF 5th) level requirements of the respective professional standard;
- Can apply soft, digital and professional skills in performing practical tasks within the profession and offering creative and modern solutions to professional challenges;
- Are able to work both individually and as part of a team, observe principles of social responsibility, show initiative, improve their competencies and are oriented towards further education.

The study results are closely connected with the professional requirements of the study level implemented at the College, the graduate's image formulated in AKAS 2023, and general knowledge, skills and competencies needed to successfully integrate into the job market and follow social and economic needs and trends.

In order to fulfill the aim and results of the SD, the head of the SD, in cooperation with teachers of the College, directors of other study programs and the College Director, has developed the 2019-2024 Development Strategy for Alberta College Study Direction "Information and Communication Sciences" (hereinafter referred to as the SD Strategy) (*see Annex 3*), which has been approved by the College Council. The strategic planning involved employees of all levels and representatives of parties involved in the activities of the College. The draft of the Strategy was reviewed by the methodological commission of the program, sent out to the Students' Self-government Council for commenting, and approved at a Council meeting.

The SD Development Strategy is based on AKAS 2023, analysis of the internal and external environment of activities, recommendations of staff and other involved parties, guidelines of the education policy of Latvia, as well as trends in the field of higher education in Latvia and the world (*see AKAS 2023, Section VI*), taking into account the defined image of a College graduate (*see Part I, Section 1.1, "Basic information on the College"*). The Strategy determines the development directions of the study direction, its goals, tasks and results to be obtained for the next five-year period, connecting it with AKAS 2023.

The SD has regular collaborations with other Latvian and foreign schools, employers and non-governmental organizations:

- cooperation agreements have been signed with schools in Latvia and abroad regarding opportunities of continuing studies in bachelor's programs, opportunities of continuing studies in the event of the elimination of the study program or liquidation of the College, as well as mutual collaboration in research and other areas (*see Annex 9 "Cooperation Agreements of Alberta College and Educational Institutions"*);
- cooperation with employers takes place in such areas as securing internships, conducting guest lectures, teaching trips, reviewing qualification papers, and other creative activities within the study process (*see Annex 9 "Cooperation Agreements of Alberta College"* and

Annex 12 "Information on Agreements and Other Acknowledgments of Securing Students' Internships in Enterprises");

- cooperation with non-governmental organization takes place in such areas as reviewing qualification papers, participation in commissions for state final examinations, organizing professional events in the field, selection of teachers, and other events related to the implementation and improvement of the SP *(see Annex 9 "Cooperation Agreements of Alberta College").*

1.3. SWOT analysis of the study direction with regard to the set aims by providing explanations on how the higher education institution/ college expects to eliminate/ improve weaknesses, prevent threats, and avail themselves of the given opportunities, etc. The assessment of the plan for the development of the study direction for the next six years and the procedure of the elaboration thereof. In case there is no development plan elaborated or the aims/ objectives are set for a shorter period of time, information on the elaboration of the plan for the development of the study direction for the next assessment period shall be provided.

The SWOT analysis of the SD was prepared after identifying the main strengths and weaknesses at a meeting of the Methodological Commission, after individual discussions with elected and invited teachers involved in the study direction, after the results of annual surveys of students and graduates, individual discussions with representatives of employers and the field, as well as summarizing feedback from internship supervisors over the past six years.

The SWOT analysis of the SD was done based on the SWOT analysis of the College included in AKAS 2023 and the directions determined therein (*see the SWOT analysis of the study direction in Annex 28).*

The development process of the SD Strategy of the College and its main priorities were laid out in the previous section of this self-assessment report ("*Goals of the study direction and their compliance with the field of activity of the College, directions of strategic development, needs of social and economic development and development trends*"). The SD Strategy determines the development directions of the study direction, its goals, tasks and results to be obtained for the next five-year period, connecting it precisely with AKAS 2023, as well as paying attention to strengthening weaknesses and minimizing possible threats.

For example, increasing the number of students is one of the most important tasks at the moment. The following SD Strategy goals are aimed at increasing the number of students:

- Goal 1, Priority 4: "To offer lifelong learning opportunities to graduates of the study direction and other interested persons";
- Goal 4, Priorities 3&4: "To get involved in student recruitment campaigns implemented by the College", "To provide necessary information, participation in events for the recruitment of student target audience";
- Goal 5, Priority 4: "To promote the study direction and its study programs and lifelong learning opportunities";
- Goal 3, Priority 3: "To make use of various directions of internationalization to obtain international experience"; it is included in order to improve functions based on the statement in the SWOT section "poorly developed internationalization";
- Goal 4, Priority 4: "To cooperate with other study directions and institutions of higher

education in organizing collaborative projects, research, experience exchange events"; it is aimed towards raising the students' motivation and increasing their research capacity;

Task MM3V4U2: "strategic partnership with the UCEC" is aimed at sharing resources and teachers and promoting student mobility in Latvia, increasing research capacity, etc.

1.4. The structure of the management of the study direction and the relevant study programmes, and the analysis and assessment of the efficiency thereof, including the assessment of the role of the director of the study direction and the heads of the study programmes, their responsibilities, and the cooperation with other heads of the study programmes, as well as the assessment of the support by the administrative and technical staff of the higher education institution/ college provided within the study direction.

Each study direction has a head of the study direction, and each study program has a director of the study program (depending on the number of students, study program directors may have deputies).

Based on the "Regulation of Alberta College on Curriculum Development, Implementation Supervision and Improvement", as well as taking into account the provisions of the College Quality Assurance Policy, each study direction has a methodological commission, whose activities involve teachers (incl. guest lecturers), as well as students and employer representatives.

For the purposes of additional exchange of information to discuss current events, discover opinions, get involvement in the development of various documents or discussing drafts of documents or decisions before submitting them for approval, meetings of heads of study directions and study program directors are organized, called and led by the College Director.

Taking into account the provisions of the College Quality Assurance Policy, the internship supervisor: in connection to students' internships, ensures the implementation of the study program according to the requirements of internal and external regulations; organizes and controls the performance of internships, internship defense; ensures the compliance of internship reports to internal and external regulations, is part of the internship defense commission; cooperates with the academic staff of the College and employers in improving the quality of the study program, participates in the preparation of the self-assessment of the study program.

The involvement of academic staff in College management is as follows: they attend College meetings, provide recommendations for the improvement of the content and implementation of the study program; take part in the work of the Council, participate in the work of methodological commissions and the development council, provide consultations, raise awareness in the event of shortcomings, participate in the preparation of study programs for licensing and accreditation; participate in the accreditation process of study programs, develop or update the teaching methodological documentation prior to the beginning of each semester (incl. developing a description of the study course to be read), take active part on College projects.

Cooperation school representatives for the study direction, incl. foreign teachers, take part in the work of various institutions as part of their cooperation agreements (incl. mobility) as advisors or experts.

For a high-quality implementation of e-learning, a crucial part is assigned to the E-coordinator, who, pursuant to the College Quality Assurance Policy, is in charge of e-environment systems (incl.

Nexus, E-Nexus, business calendar, Moodle with integrated Big Blue Button, Main folder, web page, etc.), the principles of organizing and maintaining thereof, continuously learns about the possibilities of application and updates on such systems; analyzes and assesses documentation and legal documents related to the field (incl. external and internal regulations); carries out administrative coordination for organizing, improving, developing, functioning of the e-environment; provides informative and advisory support to staff and students about the functioning of the e-environment via phone, e-mail, in person, in the e-environment, etc.; organizes and leads staff and student training about the use of the e-environment (group seminars and individual training), informs of various digital tools one may use in the study process; develops various templates, audits Moodle e-courses, controls the development standard for e-courses and the observation of its principles, their quality and observation of fulfillment terms; reports to the management on progress and development opportunities, prepares various reports, incl., collecting, preparing, analyzing and submitting statistics and other current data; develops and improves various written and video instructions for staff and students, prepares infographics, develops manuals, develops templates, participates in the development of regulations, participates in the implementation of new e-environment-related processes, controls the implementation and maintenance of the quality assurance system.

Other staff, students, graduates and partners, etc. are also involved in study direction-related decision-making, SD management and implementation. A brief description of their authority and duties is given below.

Program Secretary: Planning classes and the examination period, calculating and control of the workload of academic staff; preparing study plans, organizing acknowledgements of previous education and professional experience, organizing individual plan development and approval, submitting data to the State Education Information System (SEIS).

Study Program Secretaries: organizing study records; entering data into the database; communication with students.

Secretaries: Record-keeping of the school administration; personnel records.

International relations and Erasmus+ coordinator: Preparing, submitting, control of project applications, preparing reports; providing information on mobility opportunities; executing documents for organizing mobility.

Librarian: determining needs, purchasing and registering books and other information resources; consulting students, incl. on the use of information resources; consulting teachers.

Head of the Career Center: organizing preparation courses, providing courses available to non-collegiates, developing and implementing lifelong learning programs, organizing teacher training.

Lawyer: Developing and updating internal regulations; developing agreement templates; monitoring the correctness of record-keeping.

Head of the Business Incubator: contributing to the promotion of the business incubator among Alberta College students and staff; maintaining the website section "Business Incubator", incl. posting news, etc.; developing competition regulations, creating an application review committee, organizing its functions; creating a business incubator work program and activity plan, involving mentors; promoting cooperation with other business incubators and participants thereof.

Head of Communication Projects: providing true and full information about the College and its activities; providing up-to-date information on the College website and social media; promoting the recognizability of the College.

IT Administrator and Programmer: developing and implementing internal e-tools, technical support and development of the e-environment, development and technical support of the information and communication technology infrastructure; preparing instructions for staff and students.

Technical Department employees: development and technical support of infrastructure; ensuring the compliance of rooms with the study process.

Employers, field associations, graduates, partners: participate in the development, assessment, updating, improvement of strategic documents and study programs of the College; provide support in determining research directions, participate in research; assess study programs and the contents of study courses, express their opinions in surveys, participate in focus groups, address individual recommendations, provide expert opinions; provide social support by giving guest lectures, accommodating students in their organizations within teaching trips, get involved as mentors within the Business Incubator, take part in the Alberta College business forum, co-finance the purchases of necessary hardware, software, etc., establish stipends and grants for studies.

Some examples of the efficiency of the system:

- The study process – it was determined during an administration meeting that there is insufficient support for the development of e-courses, mainly in the organization of training and provision of technical support. In order to ensure methodological support for work with the e-environment, the e-coordinator position was created with the obligation to head training seminars and provide individual consultations, analyzing the general situation, developing, coordinating and implementing improvements in the recommendation process. The e-coordinator also consults students, thus seeing everyday problems of students, finding quick solutions and working on improving the system and suggesting recommendations.
- Science and research – it was determined that the staff have professional experience and involvement in decision-making, study program development and improvement, however, their scientific activities are underdeveloped. In order to promote the development of scientific activities, research groups were created, led by the most active colleague who was more experienced in scientific and research work (from the College or its strategic partner, UCEC), who motivated and acted as a mentor to other colleagues. The research group is granted funding for conducting specific research with the precise definition of expected results, e.g., type of publication or participation in a conference.
- Cooperation and feedback – an opportunity was seen to streamline receiving feedback from employers by revising the post-internship report system, replacing internship diaries with a broader internship provider survey with integrated AIP/AIKA recommendations,
- Ethics and academic integrity – *see examples in Part I, Section 1.7, "Principles of academic integrity and the observation mechanism thereof"*.

See the study direction administration structure in this Self-Assessment, Annex 4.

1.5. Description and assessment of the requirements and the system for the admission of students by specifying, inter alia, the regulatory framework of the admission procedures and requirements. The assessment of the study period, professional experience, and the options for the students to have their previously acquired formal and non-formal education recognised within the study direction by providing specific examples of the application of these procedures.

Student admission requirements and system are defined in the "Rules on Admission" of the College (*see Annex 1*), which Alberta College updates at least once a year. The Rules on Admission have been developed in compliance with Cabinet Regulations No. 846 (Rīga, 10 October 2016) and approved by the College Council. All additional admission requests are approved by the Council of Higher Education. Pursuant to Cabinet Regulations No. 348, the College submits updated admission requirements to the Ministry of Education and Science each year.

All persons stated in the Law on Education, Section 3, Part One, have the right to study in the College without discrimination. Considering that the SP provides first level higher professional education, only persons who have acquired secondary education may study therein.

Admission to studies at the College takes place with no additional entry examinations, based on the successful results of passed mandatory centralized exams proving the acquisition of general secondary education.

Considering that the College only offers first level professional higher education programs, the basic admission criteria are secondary education-based. Additional requirements and restrictions are not necessary.

Considering that the studies are provided only in the Latvian language, admission requirements were supplemented with additional criteria, coordinated with the Council of Higher Education, on the knowledge of Latvian at least at the B2 level, if the education was acquired abroad. Admission of foreign students to the SP is not common. SP students from abroad are mainly foreign Latvians who have obtained secondary education in Latvia.

Considering that the mandatory centralized exams include a foreign language, it ensures that the students know it (at a higher or lower level) and are generally more prepared to listen to guest lecturers, participate in various projects and mobility events, as well as use foreign literature and sources of information in the study process. The study program integrates courses developing foreign language knowledge and skills necessary for professional activities. If it is determined during admissions that the students have a low level of foreign language skills, they are offered free preparation courses shortly prior to the beginning of the learning process. During the studies, students are offered free consultations.

There is a test available on the website for choosing one's profession, which helps to choose the most appropriate study program and make sure that it matches students' interests, character, etc. "Shadow days" and information days are organized before the studies where students are given more detailed information about the study process at the College, contents of the SP and the chosen profession.

Considering the specialization of the study program, it is more and more frequently chosen by applicants who already have a higher education or who need in-depth legal knowledge within their professional duties. Therefore, the matter of acknowledging previous education and experience is significant. This process at the College is regulated by the "Regulations on the Acknowledgement of Knowledge Acquired in Previous Education and Beyond Formal Education or Accomplishments in Professional Experience" (*see Annex 1*).

Students with higher education are offered study discounts for the first year of studies because a regular comparison of previously acquired study courses takes place. In practice, the main comparable study courses are the acknowledgement of study courses related to foreign languages, information technologies and business. Specialized study courses are compared less frequently, mainly if students transfer from information and communication science study programs of other educational institutions, for example, from bachelor's level programs (unfinished higher education) or reinstatement (enrolment) of expelled College students without an issued diploma for studies in

the SP. The SP has no examples of acknowledging practical experience.

It must also be noted that applicants are entitled to appeal the decision of the Admission Commission by submitting a respective complaint to the College Director. All complaints regarding the admissions process are reviewed based on an application signed by the applicant, stating the applicant's name, surname, personal identity number and address of residence, subject matter of the complaint and preferred method of receiving a response, stating a phone number, address for sending a letter, or e-mail address, respectively. The application must be submitted within two business days after the day of announcing the results. A reply to the complaint is prepared within three business days after the day of submitting the complaint application. The College Director is not obligated to reply to a submission that does not comply with the requirements set forth. The applicant may appeal a decision made by the College Director in court pursuant to the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Law.

See the admissions procedure and requirements for students as well as regulation on the acknowledgment procedure in Annex 1.

1.6. Assessment of the methods and procedures for the evaluation of students' achievements, as well as the principles of their selection and the analysis of the compliance of the evaluation methods and procedures with the aims of the study programmes and the needs of the students.

The assessment criteria, types and procedure of examination of the acquired education are defined in the Regulation on the Procedure of Studies and Examinations. Students' knowledge in lectures and classes, individual assignments, tests and exams, within internship defense and state final examination. The Regulation defines the "basic principles of assessment" and forms thereof, as well as the system in general.

For example, the basic forms of assessment for the acquisition of SP study courses are exams and tests, planned at the end of each study course. Knowledge is evaluated according to a 10 (ten) point or pass (passed, failed) system. The examination forms of a specific study course are defined in the study course descriptions developed by College teachers, which reflect types of control of individual assignments and levels of meeting the planned study results (*additionally, see Part II, Section 2.3, "Study implementation methods. Principles of student-centered education"*).

The College has developed "Guidelines for the Development of Study Course Descriptions", which features self-control questions encouraging the study course description authors to do a more in-depth assessment of whether the selected individual assignments, teaching methods, assessment methods are interrelated with the planned achievable results of the study course. It was implemented in 2018 in a pilot project that, prior to the approval of study course descriptions, they undergo quality control (review) to check the aforementioned aspects. The study program director maps the described results of each study course in comparison with the planned achievable results of the study program and the image of a College graduate (soft skills, digital skills, professional skills).

For example, the basic forms of examinations are:
- exams and tests – oral and written surveys where students must give answers to questions complied in tickets (the student normally answers 2-3 questions and performs practical tasks);

- multiple-choice tests – answer selection exams where students are offered questions with answer options;
- "open-book" exams or tests – the students are offered to solve situations (real or model) or to find answers to complex questions while being allowed to use all sources of information available to them;
- "portfolio" – the test grade is formed by evaluations for each topic between tests from oral and written tests, essays, reports, papers;
- projects – instead of a test, the students prepare a project which requires familiarity with all topics.

The teachers, in turn, also apply attractive knowledge evaluation forms: preparation of presentations, group work, business games and role play. Such forms of evaluation develop the students' skill to express their opinion, provide arguments and seek solutions, which is in compliance with the image of a College graduate.

In organizing the state final examination, the College has a uniform approach for all study directions. The aforementioned Regulation precisely determines the evaluation criteria and system.

For example, prior to granting the qualification, the students develop and defend a qualification paper, which is part of the state final examination. In their qualification paper, the students must prove their professional and theoretical knowledge, as well as their ability to demonstrate specific professional skills and provide reasoned solutions to problems within the field of their specialization. The development of the paper is consulted by a supervisor of the paper, who also evaluates the paper. Afterwards, the paper is evaluated by a reviewer. Reviewers are highly qualified field specialists with higher education, who are not the academic staff of the College. This approach eliminates:

- subjective evaluation connected to the students' previous achievements at the College,
- conflicts of interest among teachers of the College – supervisors, if they were also reviewers,
- gives students objective feedback on the practical application of their qualification paper.

The defense of the qualification paper takes place at a meeting of the state final examination commission. The commission is comprised of representatives of employers, academic staff of other schools, and the College – in total, more than half are external representatives. The state final examination commission takes the following into consideration upon evaluating the qualification paper:

- the quality of the qualification paper, the solution of theoretical matters and the laying out thereof, as well as the design;
- the student's report at the defense of the qualification paper and their answers to questions;
- the practical value of the qualification paper and possibilities for application;
- the feedback and evaluation of the supervisor of the qualification paper;
- the review and reviewer's opinion of the qualification paper.

The final grade of the state final examination is composed as follows: 20% evaluation of the supervisor of the qualification paper, 20% evaluation of the reviewer, 20% average weighed evaluation of the state final examination commission on the questions for examining the theoretical knowledge and practical skills; 40% average weighed evaluation of the state final examination commission on the defense of the qualification paper.

See student result assessment criteria, conditions and binding procedures in Annex 1.

1.7. Description and assessment of the academic integrity principles, the mechanisms for the compliance with these principles, and the way in which the stakeholders are informed. Specify the plagiarism detection tools used by providing examples of the use of these tools and mechanisms.

The "General Guidelines of Academic Integrity" published in the fall of 2019, developed and published within the Erasmus+ strategic partnership project "European Network for Academic Integrity" says that the "culture of academic integrity is an organizational spirit and climate that informs and promotes ethical behavior and addresses ethical failures in effective and efficient ways". It's also mentioned that a "key approach to counter academic misconduct and dishonesty in higher education is to develop institution-wide strategies to promote a culture of academic integrity".

Upon experiencing a growing significance of academic integrity and ethics in the work of colleges in particular, as well as discovering of several breaches, the College reacted and developed the Ethical and Academic Integrity Code of Alberta College (hereinafter referred to as the Code). The development of the Code involved teachers of the College and its strategic partner UCEC, study program directors and heads of study directions. The draft code was reviewed by the administration. The final edit of the Code was approved by the Council.

One of the breaches pushing the development of such a Code is related to unethical practice in a teacher's professional activity. A case of plagiarism was discovered in creating e-courses, which was permitted by a College teacher.

The College also rather regularly comes across cases of plagiarism in students' individual assignments, especially among first-year students who are not entirely familiar with the concept and are still learning to learn. In response, the matters of the non-acceptability of plagiarism were included in the first-year student meeting, the SP study course "Introduction into Profession and Professional Ethics" was supplemented with a respective topic, and the study agreement clauses providing for sanctions in events of plagiarism and breaches of ethics were improved. The provision included in the study agreement is applied as follows:

- If plagiarism is discovered for the first time, it is reported to the College Director, who organizes a three-way meeting involving the study program director or supervisor of the paper who discovered the plagiarism, and the student, and they discuss the essence of plagiarism, reasons for its non-acceptability and other matters, and minutes of the meeting are recorded;
- If plagiarism is discovered repeatedly, it is planned to apply the sanctions provided for by the Study Agreement, however, such events have not been discovered so far, which speaks to the effect of organizing a discussion.

In the Teaching Methodological Conference jointly organized by the College and the UCEC on 23 January 2019, a section called "Academic integrity and ethics in the institution of higher education" took place, during which the Head of the UCEC presented the approved Codes, and Sworn Attorney, UCEC teacher Inese Stankeviča read her report "Copyright and related rights, the use of such rights in the academic environment".

Therefore, the principles of academic integrity and the observance mechanism thereof is defined in the Ethical and Academic Integrity Code of Alberta College, teachers and students are informed of its contents, the code has been published and is available to teachers and students on the College website. Upon hiring new teachers, all of them are informed of the existence of the Code, incl. by

integrating appropriate clauses in the employment contract. It must be noted that additional related standards are worked into the internal regulations for students at Alberta College (*see Annex 1*).

The SD has history of applying Code standards, incl. by examining one actual significant Code breach by a student, which was discovered by their internship provider. The information is confidential, available only at the College. Upon reviewing this and cases of students of other study directions, shortcomings were discovered in the Code, which are currently being summarized in order to improve and supplement the Code.

Upon the College taking over the experience and positive recommendations of its strategic partner, the University College of Economics and Culture, with the aim of limiting plagiarism in students' individual assignments – which is a major manifestation of a breach of academic integrity – an agreement was signed with the University of Latvia on the College joining the unified plagiarism control system. It is a set of technical, methodological and organizational elements for the comparison of higher education students' papers against a base of formerly accumulated student papers and other documents. Its creation was initiated and a contract thereof was signed among the University of Latvia, Daugavpils University, University College of Economics and Culture, Riga International School of Economics and Business Administration, Rīga Stradiņš University, Rezekne Academy of Technologies, Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, and Liepaja University. Starting from 2020, all qualification papers in the SD will undergo mandatory plagiarism checks before defense.

In preparation of implementing such a system, the College started to include appropriate clauses in study agreements several years ago in order to ensure students' awareness of the observation of their copyrights, on the one hand, and the transfer of the data used in students' work upon importing qualification papers into the external anti-plagiarism system, on the other, which provided a possibility to immediately implement the system established in the recently signed agreement.

1.8. Specify the websites (e.g. the homepage) on which the information on the study direction and the relevant study programmes is published (in all languages in which the study programmes are implemented) by indicating the persons responsible for the compliance of the information available on the website with the information published in the official registers.

Information about the SD is published on the College website www.alberta-koledza.lv with sections according to type of activity, study program, etc. The main language of the website is Latvian. Since the study process at the College takes place in Latvian, the English version of the website only allows to familiarize oneself with general information about the College, study programs, Erasmus+ mobility opportunities and key documents.

The Communications Project Manager is in charge of publishing information on the website. Several administrative employees are in charge of the necessity to update information, for example:

- The study program director reviews and updates information pertaining to the study program, as well as regularly checks that the website has information about various news related to the SD or SP;
- The International Relations and Erasmus+ Coordinator reviews current information regarding

mobility opportunities, application procedure, etc.;

- The E-coordinator updates information about the e-learning process and manuals, instructions published in the respective section, or e-environment presentation videos;
- The College Director reviews the totality of the information published on the website, updating specific sections upon necessity etc.

When discovering shortcomings or pointing out the section that needs updating, the Communications Project Manager receives indications via e-mail with a link to the placement of the information and essence of the shortcoming.

Information about the study direction and the corresponding study program is available at https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/?parent=386 *(ENG* https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/index.php?parent=1334&lng=lva).

II - Description of the Study Direction (2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System)

2.1. Assessment of the efficiency of the internal quality assurance system within the study direction by specifying the measures undertaken to achieve the aims and outcomes of the study programmes and to ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction and the relevant study programmes.

The Quality Policy of the College and its implementation mechanism are described in Part I, sections 1.3 and 1.4.

The examples below show how the Quality Assurance Policy principles are actually implemented in the College.

Social and legal responsibility. The College ensures socially responsible operations in compliance with laws and regulations, national and international standards, and ethical norms. For example,

- See Part II, Chapter 1, Section 1.7, "Academic Integrity Principles and the Compliance Mechanism";
- Since 2013 the College is a member of the UN Initiative "Principles for Responsible Management Education" (PRME);
- Aiming at reducing the amount of printed paper, saving time, more efficient process organization, accessibility of information, e-courses for internships and qualification works were created, i.e., all draft internship reports and qualification works are submitted, reviewed, and commented electronically in the Moodle system.

For example, the assessed study direction study course content involves topics related to social responsibility and ethics, fair and transparent communication, real-life cases are analyzed, guest lectures are organized on the topics of social and legal responsibility.

Leadership and engagement. Through building an organizational culture with active involvement of staff, students, and partners in decision-making, task completion, and demonstration of initiative based on mutual respect and loyalty, the College management ensures a shared vision of the College's operations and development. For example:

- See Part I, Section 1.2, "College Management Structure", on the involvement of the staff in the work of various bodies, document preparation, decision making;
- The College management actively participates in the training for the academic staff, thus setting an example and underlining the significance of the training;
- College management supports the Open Door principle with colleagues and students, actively participates in "Shadow Days", etc.

For example, the assessed study direction has regular meetings of methodological commissions and students, where all involved parties are informed on news, encouraged to share their opinions, ideas and observations; individual discussions with involved teachers and study program students; keeping in touch with employers and the industry association; employers and industry professionals participate in focus groups, discussions on communication industry trends, updating study program content, give guest lectures, offer teaching trips to their companies, etc. The Head of the Study Direction and the Study Program Director ensure availability for communication in person or digitally (via e-mail, online).

Efficiency and result orientation. Focusing on delivering results and efficient use of existing resources, the management of the College provides a systemic approach to the management of all processes. For example:

- See Part I, Section 1.3, "Implementation of the Quality Policy", Part II, Section 1, "Management of the Field of Study", Part II, Chapter 2, Section 2.4, "College's Statistical Data Aggregation Mechanism", etc.;
- See sections describing the implementation of strategic partnerships with EKA (Latvian higher education institution "Ekonomikas un kultūras augstskola") etc.;
- See "Alberta College Fundamentals of Operation" Handbook and electronic Business Calendar (containing confidential information, available only in the College);
- See the examples below, section "Continuous Improvement for Excellence".

For example, within the assessed study direction, statistical data and results of conducted surveys are analyzed at the end of each semester and study year; interviews with teaching staff and students are held; opportunities for professional improvement and further education are discussed.

Regular internal and periodic external evaluation. The College undergoes regular internal evaluations, analysing the gathered data and result trends, and uses the lessons learned to improve its future performance. The College also periodically undergoes external evaluations in compliance with national and international standards. For example,

- See the self-evaluation report sections in Part II, Chapter 2, Section 2.2 "Study Program Development and Review System and Processes", Part II, Chapter 1, Section 1.3 "Field of Study SWOT Analysis", etc;
- Each year, the College prepares self-evaluation reports for each field of study, as well as a general College report. All reports are made public on the College website.

For example, within the assessed study direction, statistical data and results of conducted surveys are analyzed at the end of each semester and study year; as study direction self-assessment report is prepared; the newest research and trends in communication and higher education are reviewed.

Continuous improvement for excellence. The College continually improves all operational processes and evaluates them in a unified system, striving for excellence in performance and quality. For example,

- Based on the comments made in the student surveys, various improvements have been introduced:

- technical improvements in several lecture rooms (for example, installation of additional sockets in computer rooms, installation of additional lighting in lecture rooms, changing computer hardware in some lecture rooms, revision of some lecture rooms, etc.);
- introduction of an e-course template for transparency and a unified approach in all study courses;
- created an option of making various inquiries through the website.
- The instructions for work and study in the e-environment are updated every year and new ones are developed as necessary. The instructions are posted on the College website and in relevant e-environment courses for lecturers and students;
- The College has switched to electronic document circulation and electronic signing.

For example, within the assessed study direction, the content of several study courses has been revised to avoid duplication of topics (e.g., Marketing Communication, Public Relations and Its Practicality, Social Media Communication), suggestions regarding the e-course structure have been taken into consideration, the option of ordering various documents via website has been created.

Communication and information. The College is accessible and open to communication, providing students, alumni, staff, cooperation partners, and the general public with information about the College's operations and procedures, study opportunities and outcomes, and College news. For example,

- See Part II, Chapter 1, Section 1.8 "Websites publishing information on the field of study and the corresponding study program" etc;
- see current information available on the College website.

For example, various communication tools and channels are used within the assessed study direction for the purpose of providing information and creating feedback – the public and private section of the website, the study program news forum on Moodle, e-mail, WhatsApp groups, meetings in person, phone calls.

Let's look at how this system works on an example of process quality and efficiency improvement of one of the College's Priority Areas "Science and Research" (see justification in Part II, Chapter 4, Section 4.2, "Linking Scientific Research to the Study Process").

In previous periods, several years in a row, through self-assessment of the College's field of study (FoS) compiled in the Common Yearbook of the College attracting additional funding and strategic partners to further the College's research activities was found necessary.

In 2014, a Strategic Partnership Agreement was signed with EKA that allowed using the experience of professors and lecturers with doctoral degrees for research activities, thus providing support to the College staff.

In 2015, the pilot projects were launched aiming to organize joint scientific conferences and student conferences that provide an opportunity to attract resources and facilitate the experience exchange between the institutions staff and the students. For example, "Social Relations and Marketing" was included as one of the sections at the Students' Conference.

On January 27, 2016, during the teaching-methodological conference "Methodological and scientific work organization in the study process" were presented the results, identified the factors that hinder or facilitate the cooperation, and were taken decisions on process improvement and system development. For example, the head of the assessed study direction, Vita Stiģe-Škuškovnika, presented on the topic "How to involve students in research work? The experience of teachers at Alberta College".

Following the conference, a decision to organize these events jointly each year was taken at management level.

In 2018, the College project "2019-2024 Scientific Research and Innovation Development Strategy" (hereinafter - SRIDS2024) was discussed with EKA management. Likewise, a group of EKA lecturers with research experience was involved in the College's research teams where a research grant can be obtained.

2.2. Analysis and assessment of the system and the procedures for the development and review of the study programmes by providing specific examples of the procedures for the development of new study programmes within the study direction (including the approval of study programmes), the review of the study programmes, the aims, and regularity, as well as the stakeholders and their responsibilities. Description of the mechanism for obtaining and providing a feedback, including with regard to the work with the students, graduates, and employers.

Study program development and review system and processes in the College is governed by College Regulations and "Regulation of Alberta College on Curriculum Development, Implementation Supervision and Improvement"; this question is also described in Part I, Section 1.3. "Quality Assurance Policy" (*see Annex 1*).

Development of a new study program may be initiated by the Council, the Director of the College (incl. on the initiative of the alumni or Students Self-government Council), the head of the field of study, the director of the study program, representatives of the academic staff, representatives of the business partners, Rector of the EKA in the strategic partnership framework.

Opening of new fields of study, development and improvement of study programs is done in accordance with the Development Strategy of the College, taking into account global development and labour market trends, national and European Union priorities, external and internal regulatory requirements, and availability of College resources for the implementation of new fields and programs of study. Therefore, the opening of a field of study is possible only after the opinions of the Board, the Director of the College, and the members of the Council have been identified and coordinated; the decision to open or close a field of study is made by the Board after approval by the College Council.

For the development of the study program, the Director of the College shall form a work group comprising the director of the study program under development - the leader of the work group, industry professionals and employers, lecturers, as well as students and alumni when possible.

A new study program is developed with clearly defined objectives, tasks, expected learning outcomes, target audience of the study program and the image of the alumnus. Whereas the study program goals, expected results, and tasks are defined taking into account the goals and expected results of the field of study, as well as the expected learning outcomes mentioned in the description of the qualification to be obtained according to the national qualifications framework, Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, requirements of the education and profession standard, and the overall image of the alumnus.

When developing a new study program, the work group prepares an application for licensing and a self-assessment report in accordance with regulatory requirements and the evaluation agency methodology and / or guidelines.

The implementation of the study program is governed by the "Description of the Study Content and Implementation", which is prepared by the director of the study program in accordance with the provisions of the "Regulation of Alberta College on Curriculum Development, Implementation Supervision and Improvement".

The director of the study program is entitled to make changes in the study program after it has been discussed at the meeting of the methodological commission. Substantial changes in the content of the study program must be approved in compliance with the regulatory enactments and undergoing the external evaluation.

To ensure continuous and high quality study process and the improvement of the process and the study program, a systematic internal monitoring is performed at the College, field of study, and study program levels, as well as within each study course.

At the end of each study year, the College Director prepares a College self-evaluation report. At the end of each study year, heads of the fields of study and study program directors prepare a field of study and study program self-evaluation report, collect data and analyse the trend analysis, prepare reports on the performance improvement of the field of study.

Lecturers, students, alumni, and employers are involved in the self-evaluation process through meetings and surveys on the content of study programs, teaching methods, quality of academic staff work, organization of the study process and extra-curricular activities, study environment, and e-environment.

Likewise, study program directors maintain awareness of the latest developments in the field and consult with industry representatives and experts on the relevance of the content of the study program to the labour market and the improvement opportunities. The views of the stakeholders are assessed through several surveys and the results are discussed with the administration, study program directors, methodological commissions, the Council and staff in various meetings; the feedback is promoted by informing the stakeholders about the survey results and planned activities:

- a students' survey aimed at finding out their opinion about the quality of the study process, the work of the lecturers and administration, the satisfaction with the chosen study program;
- a staff survey to find out about their job satisfaction at the College and views on the work of the administration, available resources, and student evaluation,
- an alumni survey after graduating from the College to find out their opinion about the curriculum, implementation of the study program, impact on alumnus's growth and further education; it is also done each three years to follow the education and career development of the alumni;
- a survey of employers: verbal and written (written survey is completed at the end of the internship by filling in the feedback of the company or organization on the student's preparedness for the particular specialty; verbal survey is done by the study program director when consulting about the developments of the area and the content of the study program).

For example, several examples of receiving and practical implementation of feedback in the FoS can be given:

- following the recommendations obtained through the annual student surveys, it was decided to wave the courseworks in the study plan and to balance the volume of both internships assigning the same amount of 8CP and 8CP. Thus, the students load between the internship and studies was evened out;
- after studying the normative regulation, the study course "Labour, Environmental and Civil

Protection" was introduced, and the content of the course was based on the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 716 "Minimum Requirements for the Content of the Mandatory Civil Protection Course and the Content of Civil Protection Training for Employees".

See Annex 1 for the Internal regulatory framework setting out the procedures and actions to be followed during the development and review process of study programs.

2.3. Description of the procedures and/or systems according to which the students are expected to submit complaints and proposals (except for the surveys to be conducted among the students). Specify whether and how the students have access to the information on the possibilities to submit complaints and proposals and how the outcomes of the examination of the complaints and proposals and the improvements of the study direction and the relevant study programmes are communicated by providing the respective examples.

The procedure for submitting student complaints is set out in the "Regulation on the Procedure of Studies and Examinations", which governs the complaint cases, procedures, time limits for appealing decisions and grades.

This Regulation defines the duties of the College Administration and time limits for adjudication of complaints and taking the decision.

For violations of academic integrity and ethics, please additionally refer to "Ethical and Academic Integrity Code of Alberta College".

A yearly student survey includes a section for comments and suggestions. The summary of the comments is analysed in the annual self-assessment by the leaders of the fields of study and study program directors. The College Director collects information about the entire College and prepares a response letter, which is made public on the College's website in response to student comments on planned improvement activities.

The leaders of the field of study and study program directors have predefined admission times, and at least once a year meetings are held with all study course groups of the study program; every semester there is an individual informative meeting with each study group.

The clerks of the Study Department also record the suggestions received during the student service time and inform the management about them.

The College operates on the "Open Door" basis, which allows for small, expeditiously negotiated proposals to be made outside the College's management hours. According to the Director of the College, the students regularly use this opportunity both individually and in groups. After such meetings, two possible scenarios prevail: 1) the issue is resolved during the interview or 2) the students are advised to write a formal application describing a situation allowing for a longer period of time for examination of the question (in compliance with the internal regulations). Board members admit that such meetings with students have taken place, but are very rare. These are usually used by Alberti of the Year (chairpersons of the Students Self-government Council) to pre-discuss the ideas of the Students Councils requiring additional funding before submitting a formal grant request.

2.4. Provide information on the mechanism for collecting the statistical data, as developed by the higher education institution/ college. Specify the type of the data to be collected, the collection frequency, and the way the information is used to improve the study direction.

To aggregate the statistics, the College has developed the following databases:

- Nexus - student data (including personal data, education, study plan, grades, orders, tuition fees, library card information, etc.) maintained by the College Study Department; semi-personal data maintained by the Director of the College;
- E-nexus - staff data (including personal data, education, study courses, participation in conferences, projects, publications, etc.) maintained by the head of the FoS, Director of the College;
- GM (Main Folder, Galvenā mape, in Latvian) - College documentation (Regulations, templates for everyday work and study process documents, signed documents, e-documents, e-registers, methodological materials, etc.) maintained by the Study Department, heads of the FoS, directors of the study programs, Director of the College, Board, lawyer, communication project specialist, Erasmus + coordinator, accounting department, etc.;
- Moodle - study and informative materials supporting the study process maintained by lecturers, e-coordinator, IT administrator, Director of the College;
- Business Calendar - data for process organization and control maintained by the Director of the College;
- ADA - Data analysis (since 2019) - for self-assessment (see below) maintained by the Study Department.

With the introduction of ACDS 2023, the College decided to establish a database of regularly collected data and indicators (ADA), which would contain, for example, the following data by semester and year:

- Number of students in the field of study;
- Number of students in the study program;
- Number of students on academic leave in the study program;
- Student mobility numbers;
- Number of alumni of the study program;
- Number of exmatriculated students without a diploma;
- Drop-out rate of the study program %;
- Drop-out reasons of the study program;
- Results of the state final examination of the study program;
- Student satisfaction - results of the survey;
- Students evaluation for each lecturer - results of the survey;
- Staff satisfaction - results of the survey;
- Staff mobility numbers;
- Number of academic staff involved in the implementation of the study program;
- Number of employers - active cooperation partners;
- Employers' opinion on the relevance of the study program - results of the survey;
- Employers' opinion on the content of the study program - results of the survey;
- Employers' opinion on the training level of trainees - results of the survey;
- Full-time study program tuition fee;
- Part-time study program tuition fee;

- Study program e-studies face-to-face tuition fee;
- Quality of the e-environment - number of e-courses as % of total number of study courses;
- Financial indicators: income;
- Financial indicators: expenditure;
- Indicators defined by SRIDS 2024 (*see Annex 1*).

At the end of each study year, heads of study directions in cooperation with study program directors and their deputies use the accumulated data to perform self-assessment of the study direction and study program. Since 2019, comparative data analysis must be done about at least the three previous years (before that, data about only the past year were analyzed in many positions). The analysis results in a SWOT analysis, decisions on the improvement of study program contents, the study process, procedures, etc. The prepared self-assessment reports are reviewed and approved at a Council meeting and later published on the College website.

More information on what data are collected, what indicators are to be introduced, for what period of time the data are aggregated, who is responsible for entering the data, and what data are imported into ADA from other College databases can be found in ADA.

2.5. Description and assessment of the integration of the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG. Specify which of the standards are considered a challenge and which require special attention.

The ESG Part 1 standards are integrated into the Quality Assurance Policy and related documents, College Strategy documents, etc.

The College pays special attention to implementing a student-centered approach, which is reflected in the College motto, created ten years ago: We care what you will know when you graduate Alberta College. The motto was improved upon while developing the Alberta College development strategy 2023 (hereinafter referred to as the AKAS 2023) so as to more precisely reflect that it is not only a motto but the basis of the real activity of the College: We do everything we do in such a way and because we care what Alberta College graduates can do.

The College pays extra attention to the quality of the study process. One of the challenges for the following years is implementing an improved Quality Assurance policy and a more active involvement of all parties, especially students and academic staff, incl. in developing various documents, assessing study program contents and realization thereof, as well as in the work and decision-making of decision-making bodies on all levels.

The greatest challenge for the College may be securing appropriate funding to ensure continuous development and the availability of modern learning resources and funding for research work, because the budget of the College is made up only of students' study fees and founders' investments, without any financial support from the state. Therefore, the College pays a lot of attention to the efficient use of resources, sharing with partners, improving the range of services, attracting additional funding (e.g., Erasmus+ structural funds, sponsors, state procurements, etc.).

See more in AKAS 2023, especially strategic goal No. 2 and 3.

For description and evaluation of the integration of ESG Part 1 standards see Annex 29.

II - Description of the Study Direction (3. Resources and Provision of the Study Direction)

3.1. Provide information on the system developed by the higher education institution/ college for determining the financial resources required for the implementation of the study direction and the relevant study programmes. Provide data on the available funding for the relevant study programmes, as well as the sources of the funding for the scientific research and/or artistic creation activities and their use for the development of the study direction. Provide information on the costs per one student (for each relevant study programme of the study direction) by specifying the headings indicated in the calculation of costs and the percentage of the funding among the indicated headings.

The College's financial sources are specified in the College Regulations. The main source of income is tuition fees as well as funding for various projects and Erasmus+.

The highest governing institution and the decision-making institution in strategic, financial and economic matters is the company's established Board (Article 5 of the College Regulations).

Taking into account the methodology of the Riga Technical University "Study on the Update of the Coefficients of Costs of Study in Higher Education and Proposal Preparation for their Consolidation" of 2014, as well as the provisions of Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 994 "Procedures for Financing Higher Education Institutions and Colleges from the State Budget" dated 12.12.2006., the College Board has developed in 2015 and approved and implemented in 2016 the new budgeting methodology.

Based on the above methodology, by November of each year the College Board prepares and after it has been agreed with the Director of the College, approves the College's annual budget for one year. This budget takes into account the number of students, planned income and expenditure, incl. the research group applications (written applications from research group leaders), required development investment and funding requests for upgrading the material base and increasing library stock (e-mails from study program directors, heads of the field, librarian, and the Director of the College), and science funding. In addition, there are three mandatory requirements for budgeting:

1. funding for Students Self-government Council shall not be less than one two-hundredth of the College's annual budget;
2. each year, the College provides funding from its revenue to cover tuition fees for three orphans or members of a large family. The maximum number of simultaneously studying students whose tuition fees are covered by the College is nine. If the number of such students is lower, the tuition fee discounts of up to 50% may be granted to non-approved candidates. For example, at the time of writing the self-assessment report, there is one such student in the FoS;
3. together with the budget approval, the Board estimates the amount of expenditure and development investment required for another two years (confidential information).

After approval of the budget, the Director of the College informs the study program directors, the heads of research fields, the librarian, the academic staff, and the Students Council of the funding available for the study year.

"Regulations on Alberta College Tuition Fees and Other Payments". On the approval of the tuition

fees for 2018 and taking into account the prognosis of a decrease in the number of enrolled students due to demographic projections, State Education Development Agency funding of 25 353 413 EUR for the Project "Improving Professional Competence for Employees" that provides funded studies to the College's direct target audience, and other reasons, the College Board had planned a slight increase in tuition fees starting from 2019. At the beginning of 2019, the Board also noted an expenditure increase and the need for significant increase of the tuition fees. The College does not practice increasing tuition fees for already existing students (as stated in the learning agreement), it is applicable only on admission of new students. The enrolment for 2019 was announced in 2018, and the expected tuition fee was announced together, therefore, it was decided to approve the tuition fee increase at the end of 2019 for enrolment from 2020 onwards.

See Annex 30 for one study year and the whole study program tuition fees.

The financial resources of the study programs (SP) in the study year 2019/2020 are sufficient (College budget for the academic year 2019/2020). The costs directly related to the implementation of the SP per one student amount to EUR 1057.00 and their proportional breakdown is as follows:
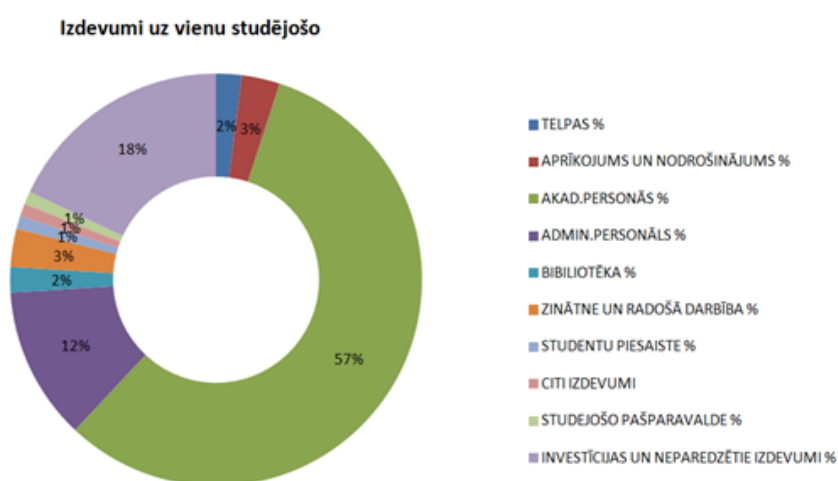

Fig. 2 Distribution of expected SP expenditure in SP Study Year 2019/2020 (%)

The chart does not include the following items:

- all types of mobility within Erasmus+;
- EKA co-financing for the organization of joint events and the publication of conference proceedings.

Compared to previous years and to the proportional distribution of the College's total expenses, the distribution of expenses is unbalanced, as the largest part of expenses is for the academic staff. Cyclical external evaluation costs are covered from investment costs, which will allow a slight reduction in this position in the coming years; higher revenues expected due to increased tuition fees will allow redistributing larger funding to other expenditure lines, e.g., "Science, Research, and Innovation" and "Equipment Renewal", "Library", etc. With the increase of the students number, the proportion of staff-related expenses will also be reduced. In previous years, "Science, Research, and Innovation" had additional funding from the European Union Erasmus+ Key Action KA107 project "Higher education student and staff mobility between Programme and Partner Countries". This project has been completed in the fall of 2019, and no new funding is available for the FoS in the 2019/2020 academic year. It is planned to attract additional funding from other projects in the future.

3.2. Provide information on the infrastructure and the material and technical provision required for the implementation of the study direction and the relevant study programmes. Specify whether the required provision is available to the higher education institution/ college, availability to the students, and the teaching staff (the specific equipment required for the relevant study programme shall be indicated in Part III, Chapter 3 below the respective study programme).

To organize the study process, the College is developing the infrastructure and material and technical facilities. The study process takes place at Skolas Street 22, Riga. The College is located on three floors (750 sq.m.). On the basis of the cooperation agreement, the students of the College have a possibility to use rooms of the strategic cooperation partner EKA, and on the basis of a lease agreement they can use Riga Business School (RBS) auditorium equipped with video conferencing system and Riga Technical College (RTK) premises and laboratories.

EKA laboratories are used for implementation of the FoS, incl. the Black Laboratory. (*see* https://www.augstskola.lv/?parent=920&lng=lva details).

Students can work in the computer rooms and library of the College and use the Internet. Wireless (WI-FI) Internet is available throughout the College. All lecture rooms are equipped with computer hardware allowing the usage of multimedia projectors during the classes.

For students' convenience, lounges are available in the halls and the library, as well as a coffee machine.

To ensure the study process, the College has 115 computers (including staff computers), incl. 83 computers for the students in the computer rooms, 3 computers in the library, 1 computer for the Students Self-government Council, and 8 laptops for lecturers' work in the lecture rooms and e-lectures. All computers are not older than 3-5 years. Every year the oldest hardware is renewed and replaced. The software is licensed or officially rented from the developers.

Currently, the material base of the College includes:

- Projector - 12 (Benq);
- SMART TV - 2 (Samsung);
- Switches - 3 (D-LINK 100/1000)
- Wireless Access Devices - 6 (MikroTik);
- Routers - 3 (MikroTik);
- Computers for administrative staff - 20;
- Computers in computer classes - 83 (CPU Intel Pentium / Core; 4-8 GB RAM; HDD / SSD; Windows 10; MS Office);
- Laptops in the lecture rooms - 8 (CPU Intel Pentium / Core; 4-8 GB RAM; SSD; Windows 10; MS Office);
- Camcorder with professional microphone for sound recording - 1;
- Photo cameras - 2;
- Voice recorder - 1;
- Printing machines - 6;
- Photocopiers - 2 (including colour);
- Scanners - 4;
- Landline Phones - 2;
- Mobile phones - 4;
- Information storage servers - 3 (including 1 - FreeNas);

- Cloud Solution - 1 (Microsoft);
- Green background (curtains) for video recording and photography - 1;
- The College Library holds 4025 books, 12 Supreme Court bulletins, about 50 journals (the number varies depending on the frequency of publication);
- College website platform and intranet;
- Moodle system;
- Big Blue Button Video Lecture System;
- NEXUS - student / staff database;
- E-Nexus - staff database;
- Business Calendar - an internal task scheduler.

3.3. Provide information on the system and procedures for the improvement and purchase of the methodological and informative provision. Description and assessment of the availability of the library and the databases to the students (including in digital environment) and their compliance with the needs of the study direction by specifying whether the opening times of the library are appropriate for the students, as well as the number/ area of the premises, their suitability for individual studies and research work, the services provided by the library, the available literature for the implementation of the study direction, the databases available for the students in the respective field, the statistical data on their use, the procedures for the replenishment of the library stock, as well as the procedures and options for the subscription to the databases.

The College Library (hereinafter – Library) user service rules, user responsibilities and rights, procedures for the information resources use, as well as damage and penalty fees and indemnification are governed by the Regulations on Alberta College Library Use.

The Library's reading room is located in comfortable rooms, where students have free access to computers with free Internet access and a scanner. The Library is purchasing the latest editions - most of the available books are published after 2000.

The Library lists over **4 000** books, **691** of them in information and communication sciences (including 182 in English, 103 – in Russian), not including periodicals. The books in the Library are organized by thematic area. The following periodicals are also available for all students: magazines "Komersanta Vēstnesis" ("Businessman Journal") and "Kapitāls" ("The Capital"), "Jurista vārds" ("The Lawyer's Word"), "Bilance" ("The Balance Sheet"), "Latvijas Tirgotājs" ("Latvian Trader") a.o.

The Library's book catalogue is available on the College website, and students can place book orders. Various books may be taken for work outside the Library. The catalogue is available at https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/?parent=10001 .

Every year, the student works (internship reports, qualification works, etc.), which have been evaluated with a grade not less than 8 (eight) are added to the collection of the best works of the College students. This collection can be found here: https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/?parent=10002. With the introduction of stricter rules for the protection of personal data, many students do not allow the publication of works, mainly for confidentiality purposes, however, these works are available for viewing in the Library.

One of the proposals submitted to the Director of the College by the students is to evaluate the possibilities and introduce in the Library an electronic catalogue of students' and academic staff

scientific and creative works that would be protected from copying and saving.

When attending the Library, the Library User shall present a document proving his / her identity. In order to use the services of the libraries of other higher education institutions and the National Library of Latvia (hereinafter - NLL), the students are invited to create a NLL Reader Card free of charge. At the beginning of the studies, each study program organizes introductory excursions to the NLL and seminars on using the NLL catalog.

For study and research purposes, the students have access to a variety of electronic databases and Internet-based information resources in foreign languages at the library of the College's collaboration partner EKA. The EKA library provides an electronic catalogue as well as various subscription and trial databases. The catalogues of books and databases available at EKA can be found here: *https://www.augstskola.lv/?parent=26&lng=lva*.

Since 2007, the College and its lecturers have been publishing textbooks, lecture notes, and study materials for seminars. Most study course summaries and textbooks are available in a closed e-environment within the study course.

Each year, the needs for expanding the Library's collection are identified. The budget of the College includes a respective position. Funding is granted on the basis of the figures for the previous year and projections for the new academic year. For example, an audit may result in decisions to substantially renew a Library collection for a study program that requires higher (compared to annual average) funding.

Before the beginning of each semester, the course descriptions are updated, indicating the books and sources that must be read while studying the course in the section "Compulsory Literature". The lecturers are encouraged to include the latest literature and ensure it is available in the Library. If the book is not available in the Library, the lecturer requests the director of the study program to order the book. In cooperation with the librarian, new books are purchased. If the book cannot be purchased because it is not available for sale, the director of the study program, in cooperation with the lecturer, looks for other solutions.

To provide students and staff with access to databases, mainly the collaboration agreements with other organizations and institutions (e.g., NLL, EKA) are used. For example, within the framework of the SP study course "Introduction into Profession and Professional Ethics", the students are informed and motivated to use the provided opportunities. The College website has a more detailed description of all the possibilities provided by the College. The College also regularly updates information on the College website about open access databases.

The annual library reports and the analysis of sources used in independent works, internship reports, and qualification works shows that students tend to use databases poorly, therefore, ACDS 2023 includes measures for improving these processes. For example, during methodological committee meetings, it was discussed that several independent assignments (e.g., essays), internship reports, and qualification works should make the use of recent publications from specific databases, such as EBSCO, available at EKA and NLL, mandatory.

3.4. Provide information on the procedures for attracting and/or employing the teaching staff (including the call for vacancies, employment, election procedure, etc.), and the assessment of their transparency.

In compliance with the College Regulations, persons in academic and elected administrative positions shall be elected in an open competition in accordance with the "Regulation of Alberta College on Academic and Administrative Posts", which sets out the requirements for candidates and describes the application and selection procedures for candidates. For example, pursuant to Articles 12-17 et seq. of the Regulations, the competition for academic positions shall be announced at least one month before the election, through a notice published in the official newspaper "Latvijas Vēstnesis" and posted on the College website, under the section "Vacancies". For academic positions, the Council may elect a person with a doctorate or master's degree, as well as with a university degree without a scientific degree, provided that in this case a person has at least five years' practical experience and teaching experience relevant to the study course. The mentioned Regulations establish 10 evaluation criteria for the candidates (Article 18), including education, teaching experience, professional experience, research or creative achievements, digital skills, foreign language skills, etc.

Elections in academic and elected administrative positions are secret. After approval by the Board, the Director of the College shall conclude a contract of employment with the elected person for the duration of the election period.

Staff data are entered into the College database NEXUS, staff database E-nexus, staff gets a profile created and a remote access via the Internet. E-nexus and the College website provide staff with access to all internal regulations, video tutorials, including those on work safety and working in the e-environment. The staff gets a Moodle system profile, which gives access to the "Alberta College Administration" section, whereas academic staff also has an access to the lectured study course e-courses and video conferencing system with a personalized video lecture room. In addition, the academic staff is also made aware of the content of "Ethical and Academic Integrity Code of Alberta College". Prior to taking up an academic position, the person's absence of criminal record in checked and a letter of commitment on use of personal data at the College is signed.

In 2019, the College approved ACDS 2023, pursuant to which an Academic Staff Development Plan (hereinafter ASDP 2023) was developed, defining the principles of academic staff renewal and career development.

For an electronic link to internal regulatory enactments regulating the recruitment and employment process of academic staff see Annex 1.

3.5. Specify whether there are common procedures for ensuring the qualification of the academic staff members and the work quality in place and provide the respective assessment thereof. Specify the options for all teaching staff members to improve their qualification (including the information on the involvement of the teaching staff in different activities, the incentives for their involvement, etc.). Provide the respective examples and specify the way the added value of the possibilities used for the implementation of the study process and the improvement of the study quality is evaluated.

The procedure for ensuring the qualification and quality of work of the academic staff is established in the "Regulation of Alberta College on Academic and Administrative Posts" and ASDP 2023. The "Alberta College Staff Evaluation and Motivation System" has been developed to identify the individual development needs and develop the competencies of the lecturers.

ASDP 2023 defines the principles of academic staff renewal, staff career opportunities, required education, experience, and competencies. ASDP 2023 includes an activity plan for staff development and defines the image of the College's lecturer:

Fig. 3 The image of a lecturer at Alberta College

Soft skills: excellent communication and presentation skills, a high sense of responsibility and understanding of the significance of academic ethics and integrity, good foreign language skills;

Digital skills: communication, information processing, content creation, security, problem solving;

Professional skills: Master's degree and professional experience in the branch, teacher training background, certification or experience, research competence.

The aim of the College Academic Staff Development Plan: The study process is provided by highly qualified academic staff.

There are five development priorities to achieve this goal:

1. Continuing professional development;
2. Continuing teaching refresher training;
3. Development of digital literacy of academic staff;
4. Development of foreign language skills;
5. Development of scientific and research skills.

Continuing professional development is a new priority for ASDP, which aims to provide opportunities for refresher training (internships, in-service training, deep company research, organizational work, etc.) in a Latvian or foreign company or organization in the relevant field of study to a lecturer who has no practical experience in the branch in the last six years or at all.

Each semester, activities in the framework of a specialized study course are organized with the participation of branch professionals: guest lecture, seminar, creative workshop, learning excursion, etc. (*see examples on the College website under "News" section, Archive*).

The College also provides continuous access to extra-curricular activities organized by the College, including lecture series "Zvaigžņu vieslekcijas" ("Guest lectures of the stars"), guest lectures, College Business Forum, scientific conference, methodological conference, etc.; the information about the activities is published on the College website, in the "Alberta College Administration" section of Moodle, and also included in the informative letters about the developments in the branch and discussed at methodological commission meetings.

To broaden the horizons and to exchange informal experiences, the College yearly organizes discussions on a variety of topics within the framework of the "Diskusijas pie kafijas tases" ("Discussions with a cup of coffee") project, such as:

- In 2019, a colleague from EKA, College guest lecturer, Dr.hist. Imants Ļaviņš shared his experience of the conference in Iran, offering a discussion topic "Islamic Spring 2019. 40 years of Islamic Revolution";
- In 2018, Assoc.prof. of at the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics of the University of Latvia, Dr. Vjačeslavs Kaščejevs shared the latest in physics about gravity waves and ripples in space-time;
- In 2017, the College staff went on a tour to Novikontas Maritime College with demonstrations and simulations, trying out the state-of-the-art simulators, navigation, cargo and mechanics simulation machines, and fire-fighting, water rescue, and first aid equipment and tools;
- In 2015, art scientist Ramona Umblija visited the College for a discussion on "How to deal with contemporary art?"

With regard to the teaching professional development of the academic staff, the goal of the College set to 2023 is that all lecturers have a pedagogical education or, in compliance with Article 16 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 569 of September 11, 2018 "Regulations on the Education and Professional Qualifications of Teachers and the Procedure for Professional Development of Teachers" an updated certificate (refresher training every six years). In order to accomplish this, in 2019, the College, in collaboration with EKA and Daugavpils University, organized and fully funded the professional development program for higher education teachers, entitled "Innovations in Higher Education".

The College identifies the needs of each lecturer once a semester (lecturers are made aware of available funding and opportunities). At least one seminar or summer school is organized each year; more than 50% of the lecturers attended the last seminar or summer school. The College also each year hosts a teaching methodological conference, and at least three lecturers from each field of study field attended the last one.

To promote the development of digital literacy of the academic staff, at the beginning of each semester, the College organizes face-to-face and e-environment learning for different levels of digital skills. Individual regular consultations on Moodle and Big Blue Button are also provided continuously. The subject of digitalisation of the study process and research is covered during the meetings of the Methodological commissions, as well as in the programs of seminars, conferences, summer schools, and other events. For example, in 2016, the conference report was "Using Smartphones in the Study Process"; in 2018 - "Usage and Development of Audio-Visual Materials for Study Process"; "Application of Interactive Tools Working with Foreign Students" etc.

The College also takes care of foreign language skills development of the academic staff and once a year organizes face-to-face and e-environment learning for different levels of English language. Each year there is at least one topic / lecture or English course prepared for each lecturer (to receive foreign exchange students and to strengthen the international dimension of College education). At least once every five years, at least one mobility possibility for the planning period is provided. Likewise, the College continuously supports the opportunity for each lecturer to participate in at least one research or project during the planning period. The College is actively engaging the lecturers in the International Academic Week, which is being organized since 2013, both in face-to-face and in e-environment (*the activity calendar for 2019 is available at* https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/index.php?parent=1268&lng=lva).

The development of scientific and research skills is integrated into SRIDS 2024. In recent years, several activities have been carried out, including organizing summer schools for writing research

papers and paying special attention to it during Teaching Methodological Conferences. For example,

- 2015 Conference reports: "Google Scholar Internet Resource", "Research Gate and SSRN Usage Possibilities in Study and Research Process in Latvian Universities"; "How to Prepare a Scientific Paper for Submission to a High Impact Factor Scientific Journal?";
- 2016 Conference reports: "Fields of Research in EKA: Integrating Research into the Study Process"; "Preparation and Evaluation of Final Works"; "How to Motivate Students to Attend a Student Conference and Help to Write an Article?", etc.

The staff is highly motivated and all events are well attended.

3.6. Provide information on the number of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the relevant study programmes of the study direction, as well as the analysis and assessment of the academic and research workload. Provide the assessment of the incoming and outgoing mobility of the teaching staff over the reporting period, the mobility dynamics, and the issues which the higher education institution/ college must tackle with regard to the mobility of the teaching staff.

There are 18 lecturers involved in the implementation of the SP of the FoS, 10 of them are College elected academic staff – 3 lecturers and 7 assistant professors (*see Annex 5*). Given that there is one SP in the FoS, the evaluation of the academic staff is discussed in Part III of this self-evaluation report.

In accordance with the "Alberta College Staff Remuneration Regulations", the College Board each year approves the budget of the College, including the salary fund based on the needs of the study programs, providing them with the academic and administrative staff and taking into account the minimal rate for one academic hour as provided in Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.445 of July5, 2016 "Regulations on Teachers' Pay".

The workload of the academic staff includes the development and updating of study courses, including e-courses, lecturing and conducting seminars, organizing study excursions, consulting, applying exams and tests, as well as research work. To ensure quality in work with students, the maximum number of supervised courseworks and qualification works per semester is defined for each lecturer, these are calculated in addition to the basic workload.

The "Academic Staff Evaluation and Motivation System" provides payment of bonuses. For example, at the end of each semester, the e-Coordinator prepares an evaluation of all lecturers' work in the e-environment, which results in lecturers being awarded bonuses for compliance of the e-courses with the College template as well as for active work and communication with students in the e-environment. To stimulate research, in 2017 the College has introduced a research grant system that allows receiving additional funding through active participation in the research group.

At the time of writing the self-evaluation report, there are no lecturers in the FoS with a full workload.

To facilitate the international mobility of academic staff for all teaching staff involved in the FoS, the head of the FoS has compiled and submitted appropriate proposals to the College management. These have been taken into account and included into ACDS 2023 as well as in the FoS Development Strategy, planning that by 2023 each FoS academic staff member would have

participated in international mobility or professional qualification development event abroad at least once during the strategic period (5 years).

Each year, FoS academic staff participates in international projects implemented by the College, engage in regular cooperation with international partners (e.g., joint research, innovation project, etc.), teaching staff of the field of study lecture study courses in English for foreign students.

During the last three years, the College has implemented the European Union Erasmus+ Program KA107 project "Higher education student and staff mobility between Programme and Partner Countries", and a number of FoS academic staff members enrolled in the program and participated in outgoing lecturing or learning mobility at the cooperation partner - L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. In the framework of this collaboration the teaching staff of the College:

- lectured, participated in conference, implemented a research project (involving students from both universities) and presented its results (*see an example at: https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/index.php?parent=1198&lng=lva*) ;
- lectured study courses to L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University students who studied at the College during the Spring semester of the 2018/19 academic year as part of the Erasmus+ Learning Mobility Project;
- put bases for the development of a collaborative e-course.

Since 2016, the College in collaboration with the strategic partner EKA has been organizing International Staff Training Week (hereinafter - STW) and International Academic Week (hereinafter IAW) to promote the mobility of incoming teaching staff. Both events are highly attended by representatives of foreign higher education institutions and this promotes the development of mutual contacts and new international partnerships. Within the IAW, foreign academic staff mainly uses teaching mobility and delivers guest lectures to College and EKA students and academic staff (*example https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/index.php?parent=1181&lng=lva*).

Whereas during the STW, some topic relevant to the education branch is chosen each year. The selected topics have attracted interest of participants from over ten countries, and these staff members attend the event within the learning mobility. So far, the following topics have been offered, enriching the STW with social activities:

- in 2016, 2017: "E-learning: Theory and practice for Beginners" (*retrospective https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/index.php?parent=1036&lng=lva*);
- in 2018: "Digitalization of Higher Education (for Academic Staff)";
- in 2019: "Advanced Research and Teaching Methods (for Academic Staff)".

In general, the College's academic staff is showing an interest in mobility opportunities, and its demand and dynamics have increased in recent years (*see Annex 7 and Figure 4*). Nonetheless, the College has a relatively minimal funding for academic staff mobility within the annual Erasmus + project, therefore, not everyone can benefit from this opportunity every year. Accordingly, the priority and waiting lists are created upon the recommendation of the Head of the FoS and these are communicated to the International Relations and Erasmus+ Coordinator and to the Director of the College, thus drawing a list of all FoS lecturers and a mobility plan for the next one or two years.
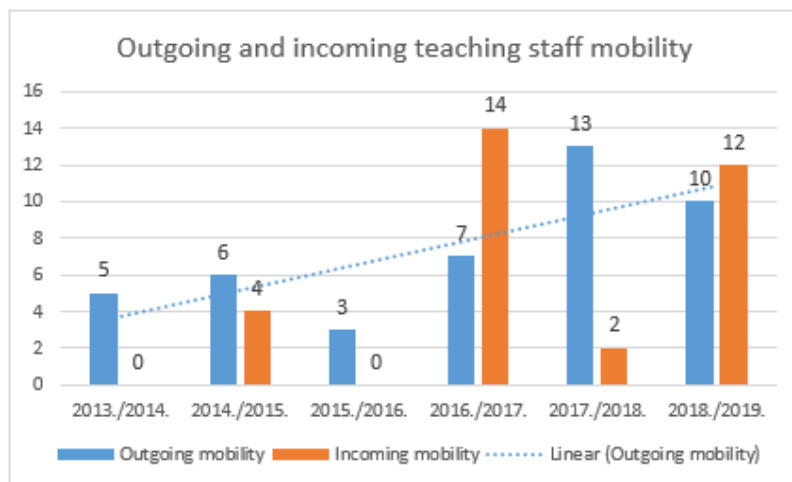
Fig. 4. The dynamics of outgoing and incoming teaching staff mobility

The experience of recent years shows that the College is attracted by the similar types of higher education institutions whose representatives are willing to collaborate and engage in mobility. It is difficult to establish partnerships with large national universities.

See Annex 5 to the self-evaluation report for general information about the academic staff involved in the implementation of the field of study.

Curriculum Vitae of the academic staff (in Europass format) can be found in Annex 6 of this self-evaluation report.

See Annex 7 to the self-evaluation report for data on incoming and outgoing academic staff mobility in the reference period.

3.7. Assessment of the support available for the students, including the support provided during the study process, as well as career and psychological support by specifying the support to be provided to specific student groups (for instance, students from abroad, part-time students, distance-learning students, students with special needs, etc.).

The College provides students with informative, methodological and financial support for studying, working in the e-environment, finding internship, pursuing a career, and starting their own business, as well as mentoring for studies and self-development.

Before starting the studies, the potential students are provided with the following support:

- profession selection test on the College website;
- face-to-face and e-information days, shadow days, career day's events;
- individual meetings with study program directors.

Considering that the College has a large number of applicants who opt for part-time studies (even after a longer study break), the College provides:

- free preparatory courses in English and mathematics;
- free self-development training for study, work, personal life time planning.

Information support:

- The website and social network profiles are active means of communication with students

where one can find the descriptions of all study programs, their self-evaluation reports, staff contacts, all internal regulations, various tutorials and instructions, lecture and consultation schedules, announcements, news, a list of partners, a summary of the results of the student surveys and the response of the management to the planned activities, etc. In the personal section "My data" one can see personal progress, financial situation, submit and receive various documents;

- An introductory meeting for first-year students face-to-face and in e-environment is organized, covering the following topics: College environment, e-environment, website, staff and its areas of responsibility, support options, consultations, job safety, ethics and academic integrity, key terms and conditions of learning agreement, conditions of study interruption, the study process and plan, other issues;
- Group meetings are organized with the study program directors face-to-face and in e-environment, informing about the study program content, study year plans, study year results, various news;
- The Study Department provides answers to technical, organizational, and other questions in person, by phone, by e-mail;
- The accounting department answers questions related to finance, student loans;
- The College operates on the "Open Door" basis, which enables students to directly discuss brief issues with the Director and the Board of the College, for discussion of bigger questions the students are encouraged to apply for meeting during management working hours; and other support.

Methodological support:

- E-courses have been created in all study courses, providing the necessary study materials;
- All lecturers give free consultations face-to-face, in the e-environment, through e-mail, and on Moodle forums;
- Before elaboration of each internship and qualification work, group meetings with the study program directors are organized in person and in the e-environment;
- The library provides both in person and through the e-environment the examples of the students' best works, lecture notes, and other support.

Career support:

- SP integrated study course "Introduction into Profession and Professional Ethics";
- Group and individual meetings with study program directors are organized in person and through the e-environment;
- "Career days", "Business Forum", meetings with industry professionals, study excursions, guest lectures, creative workshops, etc.;
- Business games, personal development seminars and trainings;
- In cooperation with EKA the students can participate in the "EKA Business Incubator";
- To provide internships, research, guest lectures, etc., collaboration agreements have been signed with various organizations;
- It is possible to attend study courses of other study programs and extra-curricular activities.

Financial support:

- To encourage the work of the Students Self-Government Council, the Chairperson of the Students Council gets a tuition fee discount;
- Social support:
- tuition fee can be waved for up to nine students - orphans and members of large families;
- tuition fee discounts for collaboration partners and their children;
- tuition fee discounts for students with higher education.

- Promoting the research through grants for participation in research groups;
- Erasmus+ student mobility funding;
- Mobility funding from the College funds;
- Support for participation in branch activities.

Additional support is provided for e-students (see Figure 5). A detailed description of the available support for e-students can be found on the College website, under the section "E-students" (*see* *https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/index.php?parent=464&lng=lva*). This section provides a general description of the studies, includes instructions and manuals, provides contact information for various issues, provides a record of a 1st-year introductory e-meeting, and more.

Academic support	Organizational support	Technical support
E-environment – Moodle e-courses (study materials, assignments, etc.) and examinations	Planning of lectures, consultations and examinations	System usage tutorials
E-environment – Big Blue Button online video lectures and examinations	Informational support (news and announcements)	Consulting and training on the use of the systems
Consultations (face-to-face, Big Blue Button, phone, e-mail, Moodle forums)	Methodological seminars for lecturers on teaching methods and development of e-course	System maintenance
Guest lectures, conferences, motivational trainings (face-to-face. Big Blue Button)	Quality monitoring and control of the study process	

Fig. 5. E-study support system at Albert College

SP students have a special opportunity to get mentor support for starting a career or their own business, or for creating a self-development plan. The SP student mentor is a member of the Board of Alberta College Anna Saltikova.

II - Description of the Study Direction (4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation)

4.1. Description and assessment of the directions of scientific research and/or artistic creation in the study direction, their compliance with the aims of the higher education institution/ college and the study direction, and the development level of scientific research and artistic creation (provide a separate description of the role of the doctoral study programmes, if applicable).

The main goal of scientific research at the College is advancing the competitiveness of the College and its study programs by achieving the study results set for the SP in research, thus promoting the implementation of research-based studies, developing competencies and results of academic staff and students, especially in the area of applied research, and developing cooperation with employers and other interested parties. The higher goal of the College in science and research development is becoming the leader among Latvian colleges in terms of development of science and research and come as close as possible to the university level.

The College Regulations define one of the tasks of the College to be conducting research according

to the study profile and encouraging scientific research by students.

The focus of scientific research for the College is applied research initiated by employers, industry associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), partners, public administration institutions, and implemented by College academic staff and students.

The scientific research activities of the College take place in compliance with Council-approved research and scientific activity directions and an annual research program.

The research and scientific activity directions for the College are approved by the Council for the period until 2024. The research and scientific activity directions are developed by the head of the SD in collaboration with the SP director, academic staff, students and partners, taking into account their interests and Latvian and the European Union policies on research and higher education and development trends of the economy and public administration.

According to the specifics of the implemented SP, the SD has approved the following research directions for the current period:

- Understanding and social trends of public relations;
- Application of integrated marketing communications in the work of a public relations specialist;
- Involving influencers in brand communication;
- Digital communication in public relations work.

The research program for each year is developed by the head of the SD in collaboration with the SP director and the methodological commission. The program provides for the implementation of specific research projects considering the approved directions of research and scientific activities. Each research project is granted funding, subject to approval by the College Board. At the end of each study year, the College prepares a report on scientific and research activities, which is published on the College website (*see https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/index.php?parent=1225&lng=lva*).

Priority is given to research projects matching the following criteria:

- they are implemented between different study programs or study directions (interdisciplinarity);
- their execution involves various interested parties: academic staff, students, employers, partners, etc.;
- their execution involves foreign partners or experts;
- their execution involves or is planned to involve external funding;
- their results can be commercialized;
- their results are or will be integrated into the study process;
- their results will be reflected in high-quality publications (e.g., *Scopus, Web of Science*) or monographs and presented at international scientific conferences.

4.2. The relation between scientific research and/or artistic creation and the study process, including the description and assessment of the use of the outcomes in the study process.

One of the greatest challenges of the College, which implements first level professional higher education programs, is developing research and linking it to the study process. Several activities

were dedicated to the development of this particular area in the recent years (*see examples in Part II, Chapter 2 "Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System"*)

In order to improve the connection of scientific research and the study process, the College has developed and implemented ZPJAS 2024, which replaced the strategy of the previous period. The main goal of ZPJAS 2024 is "advancing the competitiveness of the college and its study programs by achieving the study results set for the programs in research and creative activities, thus promoting the implementation of research-based studies, developing competencies and results of academic staff and students, especially in the area of applied research and creative activities, and developing cooperation with employers and other interested parties".

ZPJAS 2024 is harmonized with AKAS 2023, its tasks and planned results are connected with State strategic documents, e.g., the "Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030", "National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014-2010", as well as the "National Concept on the Development of Higher Education and Higher Education Institutions in Latvia for 2013-2020". ZPJAS 2024 is planned to be linked with an improved staff assessment and motivation system.

One of the College SD strategic goals is providing a professional team of academic professionals to implement the study process, who base the quality of study programs and the execution of the study process in science and research, practical industry experience, as well as close cooperation with employers and strategic partner schools. The College is moving towards research-based study development, promoting the integration of teachers' research results into the contents of study courses and the application of research methods in the study process, thus developing students' competencies.

The College provides institutional and financial support for the scientific research of academic staff and students in compliance with College Council-approved research and scientific activity directions and annual research and creative activities program.

The College supports the publishing of academic staff and student scientific research results at conferences, in article and thesis compilations, monographs, reports, and it other forms, as well as supports their commercialization. The College promotes the advancement of professional competencies of academic staff and students in conducting scientific research, e.g., learning research methods, data processing, publishing research results.

The College has developed and summarized cooperation conditions for commissioned research to define the procedure for conducting research, determining the confidentiality policy and quality assessment, and to encourage employers' involvement in defining and implementation of research topics. In cooperation with employers involved in the SD, the College has established a scope of possible research topics and created a list of possible research topics. The SD and corresponding SP have been defined priority research directions until 2024, which are mentioned in Part II, Chapter 4, Section 4.1, "Directions of scientific research".

Regardless of the fact that the chosen place of internship, choice of qualification paper topic and research group funding applications should be linked to SP priorities, College academic staff and students have the right to freely choose the topic, directions and methods of their scientific research by evaluating the urgency of each individual activity and publishing the research results.

The College is also planning to improve the research group grant system and supplement it with research support instruments in order to motivate research groups to involve students, employers and foreign partners.

4.3. Description and assessment of the international cooperation in the field of scientific research and/or artistic creation by specifying any joint projects, researches, etc. Specify those study programmes, which benefit from this cooperation. Specify the future plans for the development of international cooperation in the field of scientific research and/or artistic creation.

International collaboration in scientific research is an important prerequisite for the competitiveness of the College, and one of the types of collaboration in conducting applied research.

Cooperation with external interested parties in scientific research at the College may be implemented in the following ways among others:

- conducting research according to the partner's assignment;
- conducting research with the partner's funding;
- implementation of the research results in the partner's organization (commercialization);
- involvement of the partner's specialists in the work of the research group;
- transferring intellectual property rights to research results.

Since 2016, the College collaborates with L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University in implementing the lifelong education program Erasmus+ project "Higher education student and staff mobility between Program and Partner Countries". Collaboration takes place mostly within three similar study programs – law, information technologies and public relations. So far, the project has included regular mutual foreign exchange trips, during which guest lectures were read, conferences and seminars were attended and other activities were done, mentioned in Part II, Chapter 3, Section 3.6, "Academic and research load of the teaching personnel. Teaching personnel mobility".

In the spring semester of the 2017/2018 study year, several students and teaching personnel of the College went to the L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, where they attended the spring school opening and activities, as well as lead practical scientific seminars and presented the research they have conducted. In the spring semester of the 2018/2019 study year, the College was visited by a delegation from Kazakhstan. During the visit, students, teaching personnel and other interested parties had the opportunity to hear valuable guest lectures by Gumilyov University teachers, and the Kazakh delegation took part in the ETECH conference, as well as visited the National Library of Latvia and the Latvian National Museum of Art (*see report on* https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/index.php?parent=1202&lng=lva).

In May 2019, as part of the College SD's international collaboration, it established cooperation with CTL Eurocollege in Cyprus, which implements the college-level study program "Marketing and Public Relations". Currently, a joint research project "Involving Influencers in Brand Communication" is taking place between both colleges, and its results are planned to be presented at the international science conference etECH and students' scientific practical conference in Rīga, in April 2020. Within the Erasmus+ mobility program, colleagues from Cyprus are also planning to take part in the etECH conference and IAW. After a discussion between the Director of the College and the administration of CTL Eurocollege, the decision was made to extend the existing collaboration and develop it in the direction of scientific research, involving as many matching study directions of both colleges as possible.

Within the lifelong education program Erasmus+, teachers are involved in teaching mobilities each year (academic personnel mobility – opportunities for academic personnel or invited personnel from companies to teach classes in a partner school) and employee training mobilities (staff exchange of experience – professional improvement activities for personnel of higher education institutions

(except conferences) and work observation activities at a partner school or any other appropriate institution abroad). More than 35 such mobilities were conducted in the reporting period, where College academic staff went to a foreign school to exchange experience, and more than 25 mobilities took place where foreign university academic staff have come to Latvia.

See Data on Incoming and Outgoing Teaching Personnel Mobility in the Reporting period in this Self-Assessment, Annex 7.

It must also be noted that, since 2013, the College is a participant of the UN program Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME). In order to implement the six principles, set forth by this program in higher education, all study directions feature guest lectures in the study process on the topic of corporate social responsibility, and matters pertaining to these principles are integrated into various study courses.

4.4. Specify the way how the higher education institution/ college promotes the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research and/or artistic creation. Provide the description and assessment of the activities carried out by the academic staff in the field of scientific research and/or artistic creation relevant to the study direction by providing examples and the summary of the quantitative data on the activities in the field of scientific research and/or artistic creation relevant to the study direction over the reporting period, for instance, the publications, participation in conferences, activities in the field of artistic creation, participation in projects by the academic staff members, etc., by listing the aforementioned according to the relevance.

It is College policy to develop teachers' scientific and research activity because it ensures the application of the newest and most up-to-date information in the study process, as well as promotes the research skills of students. Therefore, College teachers:

- participate in international scientific conferences, seminars and discussions in Latvia and abroad as reporters and listeners. The obtained new information is used in teaching study courses and supervising papers, as well as in preparing teaching materials;
- prepare publications on industry innovations, summarizing the results of conducted research. Collecting research information involves students to the possible extent, and they summarize the information and present data;
- conduct research in cooperation with employers with the involvement of students;
- participate in projects. Project results are used in updating study course contents.

As mentioned in previous sections, the involvement of teaching personnel in scientific research is promoted through creating research groups and giving grants for their scientific and research work. Upon approving the members of the scientific group, the leader of each group is also approved. In the strategic period, scientific and research projects involve one SD research group in collaboration with L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University Law Faculty colleagues within the Erasmus+ program KA107 project "Higher education student and staff mobility between Program and Partner Countries" and conducting research on company communication in the online envrironment in Latvia and Kazakhstan. The results of this research were presented at international conferences and in scientific journals.

In order to ensure scientific and research activities, since 2003, the College has been organizing a students' conference, a business conference (forum), an international scientific conference, as well

as business games. These events get active involvement of both students and teachers, thus promoting the development of practical skills, searching for interdisciplinary approaches and encouraging the emergence of creative ideas. Since 2014, conferences and business games are organized in collaboration with the College's strategic partner, UCEC.

Ever since 2007, the College and industry professionals have been cooperating to organize the Business Conference "Developing Business: How to Do It in the Modern Latvian Situation?", dedicating it to the role of technology development and innovations in promoting business competitiveness. In 2018, the Business Conference turned into the Business Forum, becoming an even more important and accessible space for development, inspiration and cooperation. The Forum is an annual tradition of the College, the purpose of which is gathering the best industry professionals and prominent persons who share inspiring stories of their experience on their achievements, observations and trends in their respective fields. In 2018, the Business Forum was dedicated to the Centenary of Latvia and trends in business, marketing, communication, personnel management, law, IT and creative industries. The Forum featured College and UCEC students and employees, College partners and special guests, as well as other interested parties. The 2018 Forum program is available at https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/upload/AK_BF2018_programma-majas-lapai.pdf.

Since 2014, the College has been collaborating with UCEC, Walsh College (USA) and University of Economics in Katowice (Poland), to organize the International scientific conference etECH (*Emerging Trends in Economics, Culture and Humanities*). In the 2018/2019 study year, participants of the conference were both College and UCEC teaching personnel, as well as other participants from Latvia and representatives from the USA, Poland, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Bulgaria and other countries. The 2019 conference featured a court simulation, in which both the academic staff and students from Latvia and abroad participated. The collection of theses from the 2019 conference is available at https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/upload/2019_etECH_Abstract_proceedings.pdf.

Since 2016, the College has been collaborating with UCEC to organize the teaching methodological conference "Organizing teaching methodological and scientific work in the study process" The purpose of the conference is to share experience on organizing teaching methodological and scientific work in the study process, and each study year, a current topic is chosen, for example:

- Conference topics in 2019 were "The quality of the study process in modern higher education" and "Academic integrity and ethics in a higher education institution" (*program available at* https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/upload/Met.conf2019%20Programme.pdf);
- Conference topics in 2018 were "Formulating study results", "Modern teaching methods for student involvement in the study process", "Using interactive tools in work with foreign students", etc. (*program available at* https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/upload/Metodiska_conference%20Programme_FINAL_2018.pdf);
- Conference topics in 2017 were "How to motivate students to participate in a students' conference and how to help them write an article?", "Using smartphones in the study process", etc.
- Conference topics in 2016 were "Compliance criteria of Latvian higher education institutions with requirements of Accreditation Regulations, "Usage possibilities of the online tools *Google scholar, Research Gate* and SSRN in the study and research process in Latvian higher education institutions", etc.

The participation of teaching personnel in SD-corresponding scientific research activities has increased. The academic staff involved in the implementation of the SD are active in the scientific

research and creative activity field. Each teacher researches matters related to the obtained education or doctoral study direction and study course taught at the College. Teachers carry out methodological, scientific and research activities. Key scientific and research work, as well as publications are reflected in the teaching personnel's biographies (Europass CVs), available in *Annex 6*. The following examples of the teaching personnel's participation in international scientific conferences can be noted:

- Stiģe-Škuškovnika Vita, Milēviča Inga. International Scientific Conference „Emerging Trends in Economics, Culture and Humanities (etECH2018)", Riga (Latvia), 2018;
- Šteinbergs Kaspars. International scientific conference "Kultūras Krustpunkti XII" (Culture Crossroads), Rīga (Latvia), 2018;
- Štefenhagena Dita. International Scientific Conference of Latvia University of Agriculture, Jelgava (Latvia), 2017;
- Milēviča Inga. International scientific conference „Русский язык как иностранный в современных социокультурных условиях: состояние и перспективы", Tunisa (Tunisia), 2016;
- Stiģe-Škuškovnika Vita. Management International Conference "Managing Global Changes", Pula (Croatia), 2016;
- Milēviča Inga. International scientific conference „Cognitive Linguistics in Wroclaw Conference", Vroclava (Poland), 2015.

Research work of the SD academic staff is mainly related to the teachers' specialization within the SP and the study courses taught by the teachers. Research conducted by the teachers is an important contribution both to the growth of their field and the development of the SP and improvement of study contents. Through their research, teachers include the most current innovations of their fields into their study courses. All teachers have appropriate education, many teachers continue to supplement their knowledge by studying in doctoral programs, taking further education courses, developing scientific research work, preparing teaching materials and methodological materials.

See a list of the teaching personnel's SP-related scientific publications in refereed journals in the last six years in Annex 8.

4.5. Specify how the involvement of the students in scientific research and/or artistic creation activities is promoted. Provide the assessment and description of the involvement of the students of all-level study programmes in the relevant study direction in scientific research and/or artistic creation activities by giving examples of the opportunities offered to and used by the students.

SD students are involved in research and creative activities both within study courses and internships and during developing their qualification papers. With their research and their results, SD students participate both in College and UCEC-organized students' international scientific practical conference "Students' research activity: theory and practice" and conferences organized by other higher education institutions. Students participate both with reports in conference sections and prepared articles for compilations of articles of students' conferences. Over the past six years, SD students have been active and successfully participated in students' conferences.

See Report Topics for the Participation of SD Students in the Students' Conference in Annex 31.

The aim of the students' conference organized by the College and UCEC is to introduce conference participants to the results of students' research work on current theoretical and practical matters pertaining to the knowledge acquired in the study process and its application in learning research skills. Conference reports are published in a conference thesis compilation issues by the College and UCEC and several compilations of articles (the compilation of scientific research articles from the 2019 students' conference in the Public Relations and Marketing section is available at https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/upload/RAKSTI_2019_4_Vz_SA_Mark_AfterEditingLast.pdf).

In the 2018/2019 study year, students of the SD conducted the research "Understanding of Public Relations in Society", which involved an analysis of theoretical sources and a public survey. The results were presented at the students' conference and the international scientific conference etECH2019.

In this study year, another research was conducted, "Social Media Communication of the Largest Movie Theaters in Rīga", which involved an analysis of theoretical sources, interviews with movie theater representatives, and a survey of social media profile followers and customers. The results were presented at the students' conference and the international scientific conference etECH2019.

In the 2017/2018 study year, within an Erasmus+ project, students conducted the research "Online Communication of Companies", the results of which were presented at the College and UCEC students' conference and the L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University XIII International Scientific Student and Young Scientist Conference Collection of Articles "Science and education – 2018", with the preparation of an entry for the conference article compilation. Results were presented in Kazakhstan by SD students Māra Medne and Agita Upleja.

In the 2016/2017 study year, in relation to local government elections, the students were involved in the research "Political Preferences of the Electorate in Rīga in Early May 2017, Key Tasks of the Local Government as Seen by Voters", which focused on aspects of journalism and establishing the population's opinion.

In the 2015/2016 study year, students conducted the research "Mutual Attitude and Collaboration of Public Relations Specialists and Journalists in Latvia". Within the research, students interviewed and surveyed public relations specialists and journalists in Latvia. In the same study year, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science, SD students conducted a survey of attendants of the education expo "Skola 2016" to later create publicity materials in major Latvian media.

In the 2014/2015 study year, students conducted the research "The Population's Attitude towards the *Rail Baltica* Project", the results of which were presented and praised by representatives of SIA "AC Konsultācijas" and the Ministry of Transport.

The aforementioned research and scientific papers are part of the study process, and the majority of them is conducted within various SP courses, for example, "Introduction into Profession and Professional Ethics", "Public Relations and Practical Training" etc.

4.6. Provide a brief description and assessment of the forms of innovation (for instance, product, process, marketing, and organisational innovation) generally used in the study direction subject to the assessment, by giving the respective examples and assessing their impact on the study process.

The key forms of innovations applied in the work of the College are a unique form of studies, "e-studies onsite", and the use of the newest information communication technologies in the study process (digitalization).

College students who choose e-studies (online in the evenings) receive all the same study advantages and opportunities offered by modern information technologies. The College provides the possibility to access virtual auditoriums from anywhere in the world, participate in online video lectures, as well as communicate with the lecturer and classmates both individually and in groups.

For this purpose, the College has developed a modern e-learning environment for the student to be able to study at their convenience using the *Moodle* platform, which has teaching materials for each study subject (notes, home assignments, tests, additional materials) and forums for interpersonal communication (*see also Part II, Chapter 1, Section 1.1, "Economic and/or social grounds for creating the study direction and study program. Significance of the study program compared to other similar study programs in Latvia and abroad"*, *etc.*).

The College tries to "raise" its students as digital citizens, providing the use of modern, effective teaching methods and digital solutions in everyday work and the study process, as defined in the College graduate's image formulated in AKAS 2023 (*see also Part I, Section 1.1, "Basic information on the College"*).

For administrative work, the aforementioned programs and databases NEXUS, E-Nexus, Business Calendar are used, which collect data and information on all processes within the College.

The College mobile application is currently being developed and tested, which will become a convenient tool for students to receive and review newest information.

By 2023, the College is planning to refuse as much document printing as possible and digitalize all College processes and documents, as well as develop the practice of using e-documents, ensuring possibilities of digitally signing applications, orders and other documents. For this purpose, a digital document circulation system and digital document signing was implemented in 2019 and is still being improved.

II - Description of the Study Direction (5. Cooperation and Internationalisation)

5.1. Provide the assessment as to how the cooperation with different institutions from Latvia and abroad (higher education institutions/ colleges, employers, employers' organisations, municipalities, non-governmental organisations, scientific institutes, etc.) within the study direction contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study direction. Specify the criteria by which the cooperation partners suitable for the study direction and the relevant study programmes are selected and how the cooperation is organised by describing the cooperation with employers. In addition, specify the mechanism for the attraction of the employers.

The key partners of the College are:
- industry professionals;
- employers – companies, organizations, institutions of public administration;

- associations for institutions of higher education and industries;
- experts on higher education, representatives of other higher education institutions;
- higher education institutions, incl. other colleges;
- institutions of general secondary and professional secondary education.

Cooperation takes place in multiple forms and is implemented both in Latvia and abroad.

The College applies the following external and internal activities for establishing contacts and involving partners:

1. External activities – the College, study program directors and teachers get actively involved in the activities of various industry organizations and attend industry events (conferences, seminars, discussions, forums, etc.), as well as use opportunities of international mobility, participate in policy-making and development of regulations;
2. Internal activities – the College organizes the Business Forum, International Scientific Conference eTECH, methodological conference, international week, discussions, careers days, informative seminars for high-school management and teachers, academic competitions for high-school students and other events, which are a great platform for attracting partners and networking.

In choosing partners for collaboration, attention is paid to the partner's reputation, activities, relation to the needs of the study direction and the specifics of the study program. Collaboration is created on three levels:

1. *Ad hoc* partners – a one-off collaboration for the realization of standalone projects. Such collaboration has great value because it helps to establish contacts that help attract regular and strategic partners (for example, SIA "MAXIMA Latvija" became an *Ad hoc* partner by participating in the Business Forum in 2018 as partners);
2. Partners with whom regular collaboration takes place in a certain direction, e.g., guest lectures, teaching trips, providing internships or reviewing qualification papers and participation in the state final examination commission (for example, the College actively collaborates with the Latvian Association of Public Relations Professionals, regularly participates by organizing informative seminars on industry trends at the College);
3. Strategic partners with whom a broader systematic collaboration takes place in various directions, for example, in the realization of the study process (lectures, guest lectures, teaching trips, creative workshops, internships, defense commissions), study program content and study course content improvement and updates, raising staff qualification, research, sharing of resources, realization of joint projects, etc. (for example, guest lecturers, Business Forum speakers, reviewers, internship managers are involved in collaboration with the Latvian Association of Public Relations Professionals and Latvian Association of Local Governments, study program contents are evaluated, etc., and the University College of Economics and Culture is collaborated with to organize the international academic week, conferences, academic competitions, active sharing of resources, etc.).

See Examples of Cooperation between the College and SD and Latvian and Foreign Institutions in the Reporting Period in Annex 32.

As can be seen in the Annex, the College participates in and initiates various events and activities on a global scale, including in the context of the SD speciality.

5.2. Specify the system or mechanisms, which are used to attract the students and the teaching staff from abroad and provide a description of the dynamics of the number of the

attracted students and the teaching staff.

Involving foreign students and teaching personnel at the College is implemented through the lifelong education program *Erasmus+*. A list of the College's *Erasmus+* partners is available at https://www.alberta-koledza.lv/upload/Erasmus_partners_AK_2019_2020.pdf.

Foreign students can do the following at the College:

1. Student mobilities. A student mobility can last from 3 months (or one academic course, or trimester) to one study semester (5-6 months), or a different period depending on project provisions.

For example, within the program KA107 project "Higher education student and staff mobility between Program and Partner Countries", two students of the L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University Law Faculty studied at the College in the 2018/2019 study year (06.03.2019–28.05.2019), attending such courses as "Intellectual rights", "Theory of law", "International business", etc.

Since foreign students are not common at the College, a special study plan was prepared for receiving these students, SD teaching personnel were involved as well as the students.

2. Internship mobilities. The study internship period is between 2 and 12 months, incl. within one year after the student's graduation from the SP.

For example, two incoming internships were implemented at the College in the reporting period, which are not related to the area of the SD: In the 2015/2016 study year, from 01.10.2015 to 31.12.2015, the IT Department of the College had an intern student of the *HS Kaiserslautern University of Applied Sciences* (Germany), and, in the 2016/2017 study year, from 01.09.2016 to 30.11.2016, the College International Relations and Erasmus+ Coordinated worked with a student from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece).

See Summary of Statistical Data on Incoming and Outgoing Student Mobility in the Reporting Period in Annex 10.

Foreign teaching personnel can do the following at the College:

1. Teaching mobilities, or academic staff mobilities – opportunities for academic staff or invited staff from companies teach classes at the College.

For example, within a teaching mobility, three foreign guest lecturers from the L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University have taught guest lectures at the College over the past three years, as well as one from CTL Eurocollege in Cyprus.

2. Learning mobility, or staff experience exchange – professional improvement activities for personnel of higher education institutions (except conferences) and work observation activities at the College.

For example, the College and UCEC organize a Staff Training Week (STW) in the last week of September each year, which many interested parties attend from various foreign schools within the learning mobility opportunity. In the 2018/2019 study year, colleagues from Greece, Croatia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Turkey participated in the STW.

See Summary of Statistical Data on Incoming and Outgoing Teaching Personnel Mobility in the Reporting Period in Annex 7.

5.3. In the event that the study programme entails a traineeship, provide a description of the traineeship options offered to the students, as well as the provision, and work organisation. Specify whether the higher education institution/ college provides assistance in finding traineeships.

The organization of the internships offered to students is implemented in compliance with College "Guidelines on Independent Assignments". College student internships are an integral part of the study process. The internship is divided into two parts: the study internship and the qualification internship. The internship is intended for students of the last two semesters of college according to the SP plan.

Under the study agreement, the student is obligated to search for their own place of internship. If the student's search is unsuccessful, the College gives recommendations for searching places of internship.

The student chooses the place of internship independently according to the general and individual internship goals. It can be done at private companies, public administration institutions or social organizations: associations and foundations. In choosing an internship position, it is considered whether the student is provided with the opportunity to fulfill their internship assignments fully and well. If the student's work duties correspond with the chosen qualification, the student may choose their workplace as the place of internship. The internship position is approved by the internship supervisor at the College.

For the purposes of the successful implementation of an internship, an internship supervisor is approved at the College (by the SP director or another member of the College academic or administrative staff), who is responsible for the general organization of the internship and control of its implementation. A person in charge of managing the internship is appointed at the place of internship, who provides sufficient opportunities for the student to complete internship assignments.

Therefore, the student solves all matters related to organizing the internship in cooperation with the internship supervisor at the place of internship and at the College, as well as with the SP director.

During the internship, the student:

1. completes internship assignments developed by the head of the SD, the SP director in collaboration with the methodological commission, and approved by the College Council;
2. prepares an internship report describing the completion of all internship assignments.

The student is responsible for a quality completion of internship assignments within the terms defined by the College, the timely and full preparation of the internship report, its submission within the terms defined by the College, and its defense in compliance with the requirements set forth in the Regulations – that is how the student proves their practical preparedness for work in the profession.

The internship must be done based on a three-way agreement between the College, the place of internship, and the student. A sample agreement on the internship of a student of a higher education institution is available in Annex 3 to the "Guidelines on Independent Assignments".

The leading strategic partner of the SD in providing places for internships is the Latvian Association

of Public Relations Professionals and the Latvian Association of Local Governments.

See a description of internship organization in Annex 11.

See information on agreements for student internship coverage at companies in Annex 12.

5.4. In the event that joint study programmes are implemented in the study direction, provide the justification of the creation of the joint study programmes and a description and assessment of the selection of the partnering higher education institutions by including information on the principles and the procedures for the creation and implementation of these joint study programmes. In the event that no joint study programmes are implemented in the study direction, provide a description and assessment of the plans of the higher education institution/ college for the creation of such study programmes within the study direction.
(Not applicable)

II - Description of the Study Direction (6. Implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures)

6.1. Assessment of the fulfilment of the plan regarding the implementation of the recommendations provided by the experts during the previous accreditation of the study direction, as well as the assessment of the impact of the given recommendations on the study quality or the improvement of the study process within the study direction and the relevant study programmes.

See an assessment of the effect of the fulfillment of the implementation plan of recommendations given by experts in the previous SD accreditation and given recommendations on study process improvement in the SD and corresponding SP in Annex 13.

6.2. Implementation of the recommendations given by the experts during the evaluation of the changes to the relevant study programmes in the respective study direction or licensed study programmes over the reporting period or recommendations received during the procedure for the inclusion of the study programme in the accreditation form of the study direction (if applicable).
(Not applicable)

Annexes

I. Information on the Higher Education Institution/ College		
List of the governing regulatory enactments and regulations of the higher education institution/ college	Annex_01_AK_Main_Acts_and_Regulations-edited.pdf	01_Pielikums_AK_ieksejie_normativie_akti_regulejumi-labots.pdf
Information on the implementation of the study direction in the branches of the higher education institution/ college (if applicable)		
Management structure of the higher education institution/ college	Annex_02_AK_administration_structure.pdf	02_Pielikums_AK_parvaldibas_struktura.pdf
II. Description of the Study Direction - 1. Management of the Study Direction		
Plan for the development of the study direction (if applicable)	Annex_03_Study_Direction_Development_Strategy_SA.docx	03_Pielikums_Studiju_virziena_attistibas_plans_SA.docx
Management structure of the study direction	Annex_04_Management_Structure_of_Study_Direction_SA.docx	04_Pielikums_Studiju_virziena_parvaldibas_struktura_SA.docx
II. Description of the Study Direction - 3. Resources and Provision of the Study Direction		
Basic information on the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study direction	Annex_05_Academic_Staff_of_Study_Direction_SA.pdf	05_Pielikums_Studiju_virziena_iesaistitie_macibspeki_SA.pdf
Biographies of the teaching staff members (in Europass Curriculum Vitae format)	Annex_06_Academic_Staff_Europass_CV_SA.zip	06_Pielikums_Macibspeku_biografijas_CV_SA_LV.zip
Summary of the statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of the teaching staff over the reporting period	Annex_07_Staff_Mobility_Statistics_SA.pdf	07_Pielikums_Macibspeku_mobilitate_statistika_SA.pdf
II. Description of the Study Direction - 4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation		
List of the publications, patents, and artistic creations of the teaching staff over the reporting period	Annex_08_List_of_Publications_Academic_Staff_SA.docx	08_Pielikums_Macibspeku_publikaciju_saraksts_SA.docx
II. Description of the Study Direction - 5. Cooperation and Internationalisation		
List of cooperation agreements	Annex_09_Cooperation_Agreements_List_different_SA.xlsx	09_Pielikums_Sadarbibas_ligumu_saraksts_dazadi_SA.xlsx
Statistical data on the teaching staff and the students from abroad	Annex_07_Staff_Mobility_Statistics_SA.pdf	07_Pielikums_Macibspeku_mobilitate_statistika_SA.pdf
Statistical data on the mobility of students (by specifying the study programmes)	Annex_10_Students_mobilities_statistics_SA.pdf	10_Pielikums_Studejoso_mobilitate_statistika_SA.pdf
Description of the organisation of the traineeship of the students	Annex_11_Organization_of_Internship.docx	11_Pielikums_Studejoso_prakses_organizacijas_apraksts.docx
Information on the agreements and other documents confirming the traineeship of the students in companies	Annex_12_Information_Contracts_Evidence_of_Internship_SA.pdf	12_Pielikums_Informacija_par_studejoso_prakses_nodrosinajumu_SA.pdf
II. Description of the Study Direction - 6. Implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures		
Overview of the implementation of the provided recommendations	Annex_13_Overview_of_Recommendation_Fulfillment_SA.doc	13_Pielikums_Rekomendaciju_izpildes_parskats_SA.docx
Description of the Study Programme - Other mandatory attachments		
Confirmation signed by the rector, director or the head of the study programme or the study direction of the higher education institution/ college which states that the official language proficiency of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the relevant study programmes of the study direction complies 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.	Annex_23_Statement_on_State_Language_Skills_SA.pdf	23_Pielikums_Apliecinajums_macibspeku_valsts_valoda_SA.pdf
III. Description of the Study Programme - 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme		
Compliance of the joint study programme with the provisions of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (table)		
Statistics on the students over the reporting period		
III. Description of the Study Programme - 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof		
Compliance of the study programme with the State Education Standard		
Compliance of the qualification to be acquired upon completion of the study programme with the professional standard (if applicable)		
Compliance of the study programme with the specific regulatory framework applicable to the relevant field (if applicable)		
Mapping of the study courses/ modules for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study programme		
Curriculum of the study programme (for each type and form of the implementation of the study programme)		
Descriptions of the study courses/ modules		
Description of the Study Direction - Other mandatory attachments		
Sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme.		
Description of the Study Programme - Other mandatory attachments		
Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued		
Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme		
Confirmation of the higher education institution/ college that the teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language according to European language levels (see the levels under www.europass.lv), if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.		
If the study programmes in the study direction subject to the assessment are doctoral study programmes, a confirmation that at least five teaching staff members with doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field or sub-field of science, in which the study programme has intended to award a scientific degree.		

If academic study programmes are implemented within the study direction, a document confirming that the academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the provisions set out in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause three of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education		
Sample (or samples) of the study agreement		
If academic study programmes for less than 250 full-time students are implemented within the study direction, the opinion of the Council for Higher Education shall be attached in compliance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.		
Description of the Study Direction - Other mandatory attachments		
Electronically signed application form for assessment of a study direction	Annex_35_2-11_19-016_Application_AIC_SD_SP_evaluation_20200114.edoc	35_Pielikums_2-11_19-015_Iesniegums_AIC_SV_SP_novertesanai_20200114.edoc

Other annexes

Name of document	Document
26_Pielikums. Imatrikuleto_studejoso_absolventu_skaits_2013-2019.docx	26_Pielikums. Imatrikuleto_studejoso_absolventu_skaits_2013-2019.docx
27_Pielikums_AK_ieksejas_kvalitates_nodros_sistemas_atbilstiba_AL.docx	27_Pielikums_AK_ieksejas_kvalitates_nodros_sistemas_atbilstiba_AL.docx
28_Pielikums_Studiju_virziena_SVID_SA.pdf	28_Pielikums_Studiju_virziena_SVID_SA.pdf
29_Pielikums_ESG_standartu_integresanas_raksturojums_novertejums.docx	29_Pielikums_ESG_standartu_integresanas_raksturojums_novertejums.docx
30_Pielikums_Studiju_maksa_gads_kopa.docx	30_Pielikums_Studiju_maksa_gads_kopa.docx
31_Pielikums_Zinojumu_temas_SV_studejoso_konference_SA.docx	31_Pielikums_Zinojumu_temas_SV_studejoso_konference_SA.docx
32_Pielikums_Sadarbibas_piemeri_LV_arvalstu_institucijas_SA.docx	32_Pielikums_Sadarbibas_piemeri_LV_arvalstu_institucijas_SA.docx
34_Pielikums_SP_iesaistito_macibspeku_salidzinajums_SA.docx	34_Pielikums_SP_iesaistito_macibspeku_salidzinajums_SA.docx
36_Pielikums_Pieejas_dati_timekla_vietnei_AK.pdf	36_Pielikums_Pieejas_dati_timekla_vietnei_AK.pdf
33_Pielikums_SP_parametri_SA.docx	33_Pielikums_SP_parametri_SA.docx
Annex_26_Dynamics_of_Matriculated_Students_Graduates_2013-2019.docx	Annex_26_Dynamics_of_Matriculated_Students_Graduates_2013-2019.docx
Annex_27_Compliance_of_Internal_Quality_Assurance_System_Law_on_HEI.doc	Annex_27_Compliance_of_Internal_Quality_Assurance_System_Law_on_HEI.doc
Annex_28_SWOT_Study_Directon_SA.pdf	Annex_28_SWOT_Study_Directon_SA.pdf
Annex_29_Integration_of_ESG_standards.docx	Annex_29_Integration_of_ESG_standards.docx
Annex_30_Tuition_fees_SA.docx	Annex_30_Tuition_fees_SA.docx
Annex_31_Topics_of_Students_Conference_SA.docx	Annex_31_Topics_of_Students_Conference_SA.docx
Annex_32_Examples_of_Cooperation_LV_Foreign_Institutions_SA.docx	Annex_32_Examples_of_Cooperation_LV_Foreign_Institutions_SA.docx
Annex_33_Parameters_of_the_SP_SA.docx	Annex_33_Parameters_of_the_SP_SA.docx
Annex_34_Comparison_of_the_academic_staff_of_SP_SA.docx	Annex_34_Comparison_of_the_academic_staff_of_SP_SA.docx
Annex_36_Access_data_webpage_AK.pdf	Annex_36_Access_data_webpage_AK.pdf
22_Pielikums_Apliecinajums_par_zaudejumu_kompensaciju-labots.docx	22_Pielikums_Apliecinajums_par_zaudejumu_kompensaciju-labots.docx
Annex_22_Proof_of_Loss_Compensation-edited.docx	Annex_22_Proof_of_Loss_Compensation-edited.docx
25_Pielikums_Studiju_liguma_paraugs_AK_2020-labots.docx	25_Pielikums_Studiju_liguma_paraugs_AK_2020-labots.docx
Annex_25_Study_Agreement_AK_2020-edited.docx	Annex_25_Study_Agreement_AK_2020-edited.docx
Annex_02_AK_administration_structure_edited.pdf	Annex_02_AK_administration_structure_edited.pdf

Public Relations

Title of the higher education institution	*Information and Communication Sciences*
ProcedureStudyProgram.Name	*Public Relations*
Education classification code	*41321*
Type of the study programme	*First level professional higher education study programme*
Name of the study programme director	*Vita*
Surname of the study programme director	*Stiǵe-Škuškovnika*
E-mail of the study programme director	*vita.stige@gmail.com*
Title of the study programme director	*Mg.sc.soc.*
Phone of the study programme director	*67288824*
Goal of the study programme	*To prepare qualified, competent, and competitive public relations specialists according to the fourth (EQF 5th) level of the public relations specialist profession standard who are able to successfully integrate in the job market and are orientated towards further education*
Tasks of the study programme	*- To ensure the conduct of the study process in compliance with requirements of the education standard and Latvian legislation, and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education (ESG 2015), and the UN program "Principles for Responsible Management Education" (PRME);* *- To provide students with conditions and opportunities to obtain first level professional higher education in compliance with the public relations specialist profession standard;* *- To provide students with the necessary theoretical knowledge and practical and professional skills in the profession to be acquired, foster their competitiveness in the changing socio-economic and the labor market situations;* *- To ensure the quality of studies by involving qualified academic staff and using modern methodological, scientific, and technical equipment in the study process;* *- To develop in students, the skills of scientific analysis and ability to solve problems independently through integration of the latest research findings into the study process and promoting the involvement of the students into solving practical and scientific problems;* *- To promote cooperation with other Latvian and foreign higher education institutions;* *- To develop cooperation with employers in the field of public relations;* *- To promote the participation of the students in professional development and further education processes and to create motivation to raise their level of qualification.*

Results of the study programme	1. *Knows and understands general facts and specialized facts consistent with the public relations industry, as well as theories, correlations and technologies;*
	2. Is able to perform practical tasks in the public relations profession on the basis of an analytical approach;
	3. Is able to demonstrate skills that allow one to find creative solutions to public relations problems, discuss and provide arguments for practical issues and solutions with colleagues, clients and management;
	4. Is able to learn further independently, thus developing one's competences;
	5. Is able to work individually and as a team, to plan and organize, as well as assess and improve their own and other's work in order to perform specific tasks in the public relations profession;
	6. Is able to formulate, describe and analyse practical problems in the public relations profession, as well as is able to select and use various types of information for problem solving;
	7. Is able to contribute to the development of public relations industry, demonstrating an understanding of the role of the public relations profession in a broader social context.
Final examination upon the completion of the study programme	*State final examination, which includes a defence of qualification work*

Study programme forms

Full time studies - 2 years - latvian

Study type and form	*Full time studies*
Duration in full years	*2*
Duration in month	*0*
Language	*latvian*
Amount (CP)	*80*
Admission requirements (in English)	*Admission to studies at Alberta College is without any additional entrance examinations, on the basis of successful results of all the compulsory general secondary education state examinations. Persons who have not taken the compulsory state examinations; persons who have acquired secondary education before 2004; persons who have acquired secondary education abroad; as well as persons who are exempt from taking state examinations are admitted to the study programme on the basis of assessments given in their secondary education documents – if the assessment in the Latvian language and foreign language is successful. Persons who have acquired their previous education abroad and who have no assessment in the Latvian language should certify their language skills at least at the level of B2, except in cases where a person has obtained other higher education in Latvian. All additional admission requests are approved by the Council of Higher Education.*
Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	

Qualification to be obtained (in english)	Qualification of Public relations specialist

Places of implementation

Place name	City	Address
Alberta College	RĪGA	SKOLAS IELA 22 - 5, RĪGA, LV-1010

Part time studies - 2 years, 6 months - latvian

Study type and form	Part time studies
Duration in full years	2
Duration in month	6
Language	latvian
Amount (CP)	80
Admission requirements (in English)	Admission to studies at Alberta College is without any additional entrance examinations, on the basis of successful results of all the compulsory general secondary education state examinations. Persons who have not taken the compulsory state examinations; persons who have acquired secondary education before 2004; persons who have acquired secondary education abroad; as well as persons who are exempt from taking state examinations are admitted to the study programme on the basis of assessments given in their secondary education documents – if the assessment in the Latvian language and foreign language is successful. Persons who have acquired their previous education abroad and who have no assessment in the Latvian language should certify their language skills at least at the level of B2, except in cases where a person has obtained other higher education in Latvian. All additional admission requests are approved by the Council of Higher Education.
Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	
Qualification to be obtained (in english)	Qualification of Public relations specialist

Places of implementation

Place name	City	Address
Alberta College	RĪGA	SKOLAS IELA 22 - 5, RĪGA, LV-1010

Part time extramural studies - 2 years, 6 months - latvian

Study type and form	Part time extramural studies
Duration in full years	2
Duration in month	6
Language	latvian
Amount (CP)	80

Admission requirements (in English)	Admission to studies at Alberta College is without any additional entrance examinations, on the basis of successful results of all the compulsory general secondary education state examinations. Persons who have not taken the compulsory state examinations; persons who have acquired secondary education before 2004; persons who have acquired secondary education abroad; as well as persons who are exempt from taking state examinations are admitted to the study programme on the basis of assessments given in their secondary education documents – if the assessment in the Latvian language and foreign language is successful. Persons who have acquired their previous education abroad and who have no assessment in the Latvian language should certify their language skills at least at the level of B2, except in cases where a person has obtained other higher education in Latvian. All additional admission requests are approved by the Council of Higher Education.
Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	
Qualification to be obtained (in english)	Qualification of Public relations specialist

Places of implementation

Place name	City	Address
Alberta College	RĪGA	SKOLAS IELA 22 - 5, RĪGA, LV-1010

Part-time extramural studies - distance education - 2 years, 6 months - latvian

Study type and form	Part-time extramural studies - distance education
Duration in full years	2
Duration in month	6
Language	latvian
Amount (CP)	80
Admission requirements (in English)	Admission to studies at Alberta College is without any additional entrance examinations, on the basis of successful results of all the compulsory general secondary education state examinations. Persons who have not taken the compulsory state examinations; persons who have acquired secondary education before 2004; persons who have acquired secondary education abroad; as well as persons who are exempt from taking state examinations are admitted to the study programme on the basis of assessments given in their secondary education documents – if the assessment in the Latvian language and foreign language is successful. Persons who have acquired their previous education abroad and who have no assessment in the Latvian language should certify their language skills at least at the level of B2, except in cases where a person has obtained other higher education in Latvian. All additional admission requests are approved by the Council of Higher Education.
Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	
Qualification to be obtained (in english)	Qualification of Public relations specialist

Places of implementation

Place name	City	Address
Alberta College	RĪGA	SKOLAS IELA 22 - 5, RĪGA, LV-1010

III - DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME (1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme)

1.1. Description and analysis of changes in study programme parameters that have taken place since the issue of the previous accreditation certificate of study direction or the license of study programme if study programme is not included in the accreditation page of the study direction

See Annex 33 for the parameters of the study program "Public Relations".

1.2. Analysis and assessment of the statistical data on the students of the respective study programme, the dynamics of the number of the students, and the factors affecting the changes to the number of the students. The analysis shall be broken down in the different study forms, types, and languages.

In the reporting period, the number of students matriculated in the SP varied and showed a tendency for a higher demand for part-time studies in the College compared to full-time studies. This is explained by the employment of the students immediately after graduating from high school. By the end of the first year, full-time students choose to start working, combining work with studies and often changing the form of studies from full-time to part-time to combine work and studies.

At the same time, the students who choose this SP are motivated and growth-orientated. The students choose part-time studies because they are already employed in the field of public relations and are willing to upgrade their professional knowledge and competences or have a university degree in another field in which they operate, but feel that they are lacking specific knowledge in information and communication sciences.
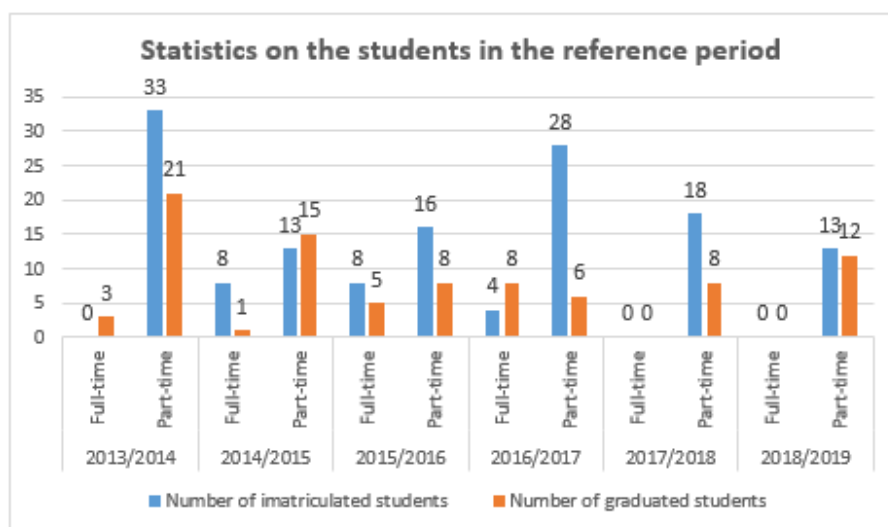

Fig. 6. The statistics on the students of the SP in the reference period

Despite a decrease in the number of matriculated students in recent years, the number of

graduates is stable. According to the aims set in the ACDS 2023, there is a planned increase of these indicators. In addition, the decision on supplementing SP contents with current industry trends involved the consideration of an increases in the interest of prospective students by offering a broader spectrum of learned knowledge in modern popular integrated marketing communication.

See Annex 14 of this self-evaluation for statistical data on students in the reference period.

1.3. Analysis and assessment of the interrelation between the name of the study programme, the degree or professional qualification to be acquired or the degree and professional qualification to be acquired, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and the admission requirements.

The first level higher professional education study program "Public Relations" is the only study program of this level in Latvia, which offers to acquire the qualification of a public relations specialist. The program is based on classic values of public relations and creating an understanding thereof, supplemented by modern industry trends.

Target audience of the SP:

(1) persons with a secondary education who wish to obtain their first higher professional education in the short term, and to begin working in the public relations field as a qualified workforce;

2) persons with higher education (not in information and communication sciences), who in their daily activities need in-depth public relations knowledge or need a document certifying their competence in information and communication sciences.

The aim of the SP corresponds to the title of the study program and intended awarded qualification and it is: "To prepare qualified, competent, and competitive public relations specialists according to the fourth (EQF 5th) level of the public relations specialist profession standard who are able to successfully integrate in the job market and are orientated towards further education".

Learning outcomes of the study program follow the aim of the SP:

1. Knows and understands general facts and specialized facts consistent with the public relations industry, as well as theories, correlations and technologies;
2. Is able to perform practical tasks in the public relations profession on the basis of an analytical approach;
3. Is able to demonstrate skills that allow one to find creative solutions to public relations problems, discuss and provide arguments for practical issues and solutions with colleagues, clients and management;
4. Is able to learn further independently, thus developing one's competences;
5. Is able to work individually and as a team, to plan and organize, as well as assess and improve their own and other's work in order to perform specific tasks in the public relations profession;
6. Is able to formulate, describe and analyse practical problems in the public relations profession, as well as is able to select and use various types of information for problem solving;
7. Is able to contribute to the development of public relations industry, demonstrating an understanding of the role of the public relations profession in a broader social context.

The SP has the following tasks:

- to ensure the conduct of the study process in compliance with requirements of the education standard and Latvian legislation, and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education (ESG 2015), and the UN program "Principles for Responsible Management Education" (PRME);
- to provide students with conditions and opportunities to obtain first level professional higher education in compliance with the public relations specialist profession standard;
- to provide students with the necessary theoretical knowledge and practical and professional skills in the profession to be acquired, foster their competitiveness in the changing socio-economic and the labor market situations;
- to ensure the quality of studies by involving qualified academic staff and using modern methodological, scientific, and technical equipment in the study process;
- to develop in students, the skills of scientific analysis and ability to solve problems independently through integration of the latest research findings into the study process and promoting the involvement of the students into solving practical and scientific problems;
- to promote cooperation with other Latvian and foreign higher education institutions;
- to develop cooperation with employers in the field of public relations;
- to promote the participation of the students in professional development and further education processes and to create motivation to raise their level of qualification.

SP is a first level professional higher education study program, its admission requirements do not include any specialization preliminary knowledge, they only include the knowledge acquired at secondary education level, including foreign language.

Graduates of the SP are awarded a "Public Relations Specialist" qualification:

- with knowledge, skills, and competences in accordance with level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF);
- which meets the National Education Standard for first level professional higher education;
- which, through the implementation of the aims, tasks, and results of the SP, meets the "Public Relations Specialist" profession standard;
- which incorporates the image of the College graduate and the knowledge, skills, and competences expected to be acquired by the SP graduates.

III - DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME (2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof)

2.1. Assessment of the relevance of the content of the study course/ module and the compliance with the needs of the relevant industry and labour market and with the trends in science. Provide information on how and whether the content of the study course/ module is updated in line with the development trends of the relevant industry, labour market, and science. In case of master's and doctoral study programmes, specify and provide the justification as to whether the degrees are awarded in view of the developments and findings in the field of science or artistic creation.

In accordance with the Quality Assurance Policy of the College, the content of the study programs and the study courses is assessed as follows:

- the lecturers, students, alumni and employers are involved in the self-evaluation process through meetings and surveys on the content of the study programs, teaching methods, quality of academic staff work, organization of the study process and extra-curricular activities, study environment, and e-environment;
- the directors of the study programs maintain awareness of the latest developments in the field and consult with industry representatives and experts on the relevance of the content of the study program to the labor market and the opportunities for improvement;
- the views of the stakeholders are assessed through several surveys and the results are discussed with the administration, study program directors, methodological commissions, the Council and staff in various meetings; the feedback is promoted by informing the stakeholders about the survey results and planned activities.

In accordance with the Regulation of Alberta College on Curriculum Development, Implementation Supervision and Improvement (*see Annex 1*), at least once per academic year, the director of the program shall convene a meeting of the methodological commission to discuss and decide upon any necessary improvement measures for:

- the content of the descriptions of the study courses and their updating;
- duplication of the content of the study courses, elimination of thematic shortcomings;
- the progress in reaching the learning outcomes of the study courses and the need for improvement of the description of the learning outcomes (refinement of results, improvement of teaching methods, improvement of independent assignments, improvement of assessment criteria, etc.).

Based on the results of self-evaluation, opinions and decisions of the methodological commission, the director of the study program makes and organizes the approval of changes in the study program content, study course descriptions, internship assignments, sample themes of qualification work and controls and ensures compliance with the documents mentioned in the Regulations on curriculum development.

The previous version of the SP was refined to address the shortcomings identified during the methodological commission meetings, for example,

- fragmentation of the SP has been eliminated (by excluding 1-credit study courses, redistributing a larger amount of credits for the branch study courses);
- the internship has been evenly redistributed between study and qualification internships, assigning eight (8) and eight (8) credits to them (previously it was divided into six (6) and ten (10) credits);
- after consultation with the employers, the amount of credits for branch study courses was increased, for example, "Public Relations and Practical Training" (before – Public Relations) from three (3) to four (4) credits; "Introduction into Profession and Professional Ethics" (before – Introfuction into Profession) from one (1) to three (3) credits;
- taking into account the industry of the SP, it incorporates *The Principles for Responsible Management Education* of the UN initiative (PRME), https://www.unprme.org/about-prme/the-six-principles.php.

The PRME principles are followed in the implementation of the SP and are expressed in the following ways:

1. The purpose is to develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy. To comply with this principle, SP students are involved in various activities that develop their independent thinking, decision-making, and participation in public and

community life. For example, the students take part in business games, during which they need to independently establish a state, adopt laws and regulations, organise and develop entrepreneurship.

2. The values are incorporated into the SP and academic activities. The values are in line with international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact. To familiarise the students with its terms, the content of the SP includes topics such as corporate social responsibility and initiatives thereof, prevention of discrimination in work relations etc. To promote social responsibility of the students, each year College students are invited to take part in various charity events.

3. Educational processes are selected to enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership. In order for College graduates to successfully integrate into the work environment, the educational process of the SP curriculum is organised using state-of-the-art sources, the latest technologies, and training methods.

4. The research advances understanding of the SP students about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value. From the first year on, the students are involved in various research and public opinion polls.

5. Partnering with business managers to extend students' and business managers' knowledge of the challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges. The SP actively cooperates with entrepreneurs, conducts surveys, analyses, and takes into account their views on the knowledge and skills that are important for the students, and involves the entrepreneurs in various College activities. Two internship placements during the studies are aiming at familiarizing the students with the business environment and its challenges.

6. The dialogue facilitates the exchange of views between educators, lawyers, business and the media, consumers, NGOs, and other stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability. The students and lecturers of the SP are actively engaged in dialogue with employers, NGOs, state or municipal institution representatives.

The SP is structured around the following trends in the branch:

1. In the study process:

- student-centered approach;
- result-orientated studies;
- interdisciplinarity;
- alignment of the Latvian Qualifications Framework with the European Qualifications Framework.

2. In the labor market:

- digital skills;
- communication skills, teamwork;
- presentation skills;
- problem solving and decision-making skills;
- social responsibility and ethics.

3. In the field of public relations:
    - application of integrated marketing communication;
    - precision, transparency and reliability of information and contents;
    - an increase of the importance of digital communication channels and tools;
    - the importance of the role of influencer marketing;
    - an increase in corporate social initiatives.

2.2. Assessment of the interrelation between the information included in the study courses/ modules, the intended learning outcomes, the set aims and other indicators, the relation between the aims of the study course/ module and the aims and intended outcomes of the study programme. In case of a doctoral study programme, provide a description of the main research roadmaps and the impact of the study programme on research and other education levels.

The elaboration and updating of study course descriptions is regulated by the "Regulation of Alberta College on Curriculum Development, Implementation Supervision and Improvement", which contains guidelines for the elaboration of the course description. The development and update of study course descriptions is coordinated by the director of the SP who organizes discussions within the methodological commissions and ensures:

- that the lecturers are aware of the aims, tasks and learning outcomes of the SP and of the image of the College graduate and the requirements of the profession standard;
- that the learning outcomes identified in the course descriptions are relevant to the aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the SP, the College graduate and the requirements of the profession standard;
- that the duplication and shortcomings of the courses are eliminated.

Before elaborating the description of the study course, the lecturers are additionally introduced to the study course description development guidelines (a video recording of the training seminar is also available) that explain the link between the study results and the learning outcomes to be achieved at the end of the course. According to the formulated outcomes of the study course, a thematic plan and a plan of independent assignments is developed and the teaching methods are selected. The outcomes of the study courses are related to the professional standard and to the outcomes of the SP and can be divided into three groups:

- knowledge and understanding;
- skills - the ability to apply knowledge in the field of the study course, as well as communication and general skills in this field;
- competencies - when formulating competences in the course, the level of education (LQF 5) should be taken into account and applied to the particular study course.

In accordance with the College guidelines for the development of the course description, to check the formulation of the learning outcomes, the lecturers use the following self-checking questions:

- are the learning outcomes related to the profession standard?
- do the learning outcomes meet the requirements of LQF level 5 and the outcomes of the SP?
- do the learning outcomes have clear and simple wording?
- is there a focus on the most important aspect?
- are the learning outcomes student-orientated?
- was only one verb used in the formulation of each outcome?
- are they result-orientated (not process-oriented!)?
- is the planned outcome setting the minimum requirements?
- is the outcome achievable?
- can the outcome be evaluated?
- is the number of outcomes too large? (the desirable number is 5 to 8)

To avoid topic duplication and non-covered areas, the following self-checking questions are defined

for the thematic planning:

- do all the topics correspond to the outcomes of the study course?
- do all the topics meet the requirements of the profession standard?
- is there topic duplication and are the topics consistent and aligned with the content of other related courses?

The director of the SP verifies the aim, outcomes, content, methods, and topicality of the study course description, the topicality and actual availability of the literature and sources used. The director of the SP performs the mapping of the outcomes of the study course against the aim and the outcomes of the study program, the image of the College graduate, and the profession standard. If necessary, the course description is corrected with the help of the author of the description of the study course.

After mapping, the study course descriptions are approved by the director of the SP. After approval of the description of the course, it is published in the Moodle system under the respective e-course, thus providing information to the students. The E-Coordinator verifies publishing of the information necessary for the study course in the e-environment and its compliance with the College standards (E-course template).

2.3. Assessment of the study implementation methods (including the evaluation methods) by providing the analysis of how the study implementation methods (including the evaluation methods) used in the study courses/ modules are selected, what they are, and how they contribute to the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study courses and the aims of the study programme. Provide an explanation of how the student-centred principles are taken into account in the implementation of the study process.

According to the College guidelines for the development of the course description, the following study implementation methods are used in the theoretical and practical learning:

- theoretical: lectures (introductory, review/repetition lecture, informative lecture, problem lecture, visual lecture, single-student lecture, lecture with planned mistakes, etc.);
- practical: case study, group work, group discussion, pair work during classes, role-playing games, simulation games, discussions, seminars, creative workshops, projects, brainstorming methods, exercises, reading, field trips, study visits, etc.;
- evaluation examples: seminars, discussions, presentation, test, essay, exam, etc.

The methods of study implementation are chosen so as to achieve the intended outcomes of the study course, also guided by Bloom's taxonomy for the determination of study course outcomes and methods.

The implementation of the SP is carried out creatively and diversely, using different methods:

1) lectures and guest lectures – mainly to acquaint the students with the basic principles of the study course and questions in which the available textbooks are scarce, as well as for the study courses where independent learning is difficult;

2) independent work – mainly to independently read the necessary normative acts and the literature, court judgments, or other sources recommended by the lecturer;

3) work in small groups – mainly to learn how to work in a team and to develop communicative and

presentation skills;

4) dialogue and discussions – it is used in the study courses, where together with the theoretical knowledge the students acquire and develop communicative and argumentative skills;

5) practical classes – to help in the application of the obtained theoretical knowledge, for example, in solving cases, drawing up document templates, etc.;

6) internship – to acquire and develop practical working skills through getting acquainted with the work processes taking place in the internship company and taking part in them;

7) seminars – are organized in almost all study courses to develop the culture of speech of the students, their presentation skills, argumentation skills, and ability to defend their opinion;

8) student conferences – to discuss current issues in the branch, conduct and present independent research, improving presentation and public speaking skills;

9) business and situational games – to learn how to apply the acquired theoretical knowledge through solving different problems and situations;

10) study tours – to get acquainted with the functioning of various organizations and to obtain new information from the specialists in the branch;

11) eLearning – to improve the communication between the academic staff and the students, each study course includes online video lectures (the recording is then available in the e-environment), consultations in the e-environment, the students receive, complete, and submit their assignments in the e-environment, the lecturers review and evaluate the assignments in the e-environment.

In order to ensure a uniform level of competencies (knowledge and skills) acquired within study courses among full-time and part-time students and e-students, several years ago, the College set forth a challenge to develop such an implementation system and methodology for e-studies that would be as close as possible to classical onsite studies. Teacher training took and is still taking place, there is a teachers' assessment and motivation system in place to promote reaching the goal faster and more efficiently:

- *onsite lectures, discussions, presentations for students of all study forms (incl. e-students):* online lectures were implemented for all study courses, during which direct contact with the lecturer and study mates is ensured, discussions and presentations take place; video lectures or e-lectures online, and their recordings are available to students of all study forms, but they are especially intended for e-students (examples can be accessed on the Moodle system of the College);
- *informational support in the e-environment for students of all study forms (incl. full-time and part-time students):* e-courses have been created that have maximum uniformity in terms of contents and visuals for students of all study forms (examples can be accessed on the Moodle system of the College);
- *the number, type and evaluation methods of individual assignments are encouraged to be related to the planned achievable study results of the study course*, while keeping a maximum uniformity for students of all study forms.

Some examples:

- In study courses that are intended to develop students' skills of "conducting research", individual and group assignments must provide appropriate tasks (e.g., „Research Methods in Social Sciences", "Public Relations and Practical Training");
- Study courses that are intended to develop students' skills of "finding a solution to problem situations" (etc.), actively use role-play, case studies and discussion, incl., during online

lectures for e-students (e.g., „Crisis Communication", "Social Media Communication", "Introduction to Law" etc.);

- Various study courses search for approaches to developing "presentational skills", and a testing form of the planned result is established; this issue creates the largest challenge for the College in training and motivating teachers to develop their study courses while searching for contemporary approaches and implementing new solutions for e-students:
  - individual assignments have been implemented, the results of which are tested by discussions and presentations in the e-environment, incl. e-lectures online and/or oral exam (e.g., „Introduction into Profession and Professional Ethics", "Public Relations and Practical Training", "Rhetorics and Presentation Skills");
  - Internship and Qualification Internship are defended in person in the presence of a defense commission and classmates.

Another challenge is to achieve that the final assessment in all study courses is be formed considering results achieved during the studies, not only evaluation in exams. Therefore, study courses are continuously developed and assessment criteria for results to be achieved are continuously improved by searching the most efficient approaches to determining evaluation proportions and connecting the final evaluation with the achievements during the studies, for example, making a connection with the completed and evaluated individual assignments.

The College guidelines for the development of the course description include a comprehensive explanation of the independent assignment, including the balance of the compulsory reading volume and its correspondence to the amount of awarded credits (ECTS), and the consistency of the chosen methods with the planned outcomes of the study course. The lecturers use the following self-checking questions:

- do the students have to do the described independent assignments outside the contact hours?
- are most assignments practical?
- are the independent assignments aimed at reaching the learning outcomes?
- are the independent assignments aimed at gaining the knowledge and skills specified in the profession standard?
- is there a link to real examples from the labor market?
- does the description of the independent assignment specify if it is an independent, group, or other assignment?
- does the number of assignments correspond to the volume of the credits (is not lower or higher)?
- is compulsory reading included (what about listening, watching)?
- does the total reading volume correspond to the volume of the credits (is not lower or higher)?
- does the type of control make it possible to make sure if each task, including compulsory reading, is completed?
- do the chosen study methods correspond to the planned outcomes of the study course?

Testing and evaluation of knowledge is carried out in compliance with the evaluation methods set by the "Regulation on the Procedure of Studies and Examinations"; for example, aggregation of positive achievements, principle of mandatory evaluation, principle of openness and clarity of the requirements, principle of diversity of the testing methods used for evaluation *(see Section 9 of this Regulation)*.

In the description of the study course the lecturers include an explanation of how the evaluation of the study course is formed and how the achievement level of each learning outcome is assessed,

which method is used for testing (*see section "Learning Requirements and Evaluation of the Results of the Study Course" of the course descriptions*).

The student-centered approach at the College is implemented as follows:

- integrating into the study process, practically orientated assignments, training, internship;
- providing opportunities for students to engage in discussions, attend seminars, guest lectures, and workshops, work individually and in groups, engage in research and creative work, prepare scientific papers and present them at conferences, participate in project development and implementation, and participate in creative activities;
- organizing meetings with experienced professionals who share experiences, inspire self-development and success during guest lectures, workshops, seminars, study tours, and the Business Forum;
- promoting access to education and personalization of studies, integrating modern teaching methods, actively digitizing the study process, providing informative and material support to students;
- designing result-orientated study courses, aiming at the achievement of the planned learning outcomes at the level of the study course, study program, profession standard, education standard, and European and Latvian Qualifications Frameworks (EQF/LQF);
- ensuring the availability of information, including through posting internal regulating documents on the website and course descriptions and methodological materials - in the Moodle system;
- providing various forms of study in all study programs: full-time and part-time, face-to-face and e-learning, preparing individual study plans and providing consultations;
- ensuring the recognition and equivalence of prior education and practical experience;
- providing a possibility to study isolated study courses from other study programs of the College, providing study and internship mobility opportunities in Latvia and abroad, and providing possibilities for further studies;
- involving students in the work at the institutions of all levels, providing opportunities for real participation in decision-making;
- providing opportunities for further studies at the next (undergraduate, bachelor) level.

2.4. If the study programme entails a traineeship, provide the analysis and assessment of the relation between the tasks of the traineeship included in the study programme and the learning outcomes of the study programme. Specify how the higher education institution/ college supports the students within the study programme regarding the fulfilment of the tasks set for students during the traineeship.

At least once per academic year, the director of the SP shall convene a meeting of the methodological commission to discuss and decide upon any necessary improvement measures for the internship tasks. The internship tasks may be updated, for example, if:

- the internship supervisor has indicated the necessary changes or shortcomings;
- there are current trends in the field of study of the SP and it is essential to study and master them within the framework of internship;
- the students have rightly pointed out the possibilities for improvement of the internship tasks.

Before and during the internship, the director of the SP organizes a consultation for the students

(face-to-face and in the e-environment), informing them of the general conditions for choosing the most appropriate internship place, the procedure of the internship, key deadlines, and explains the internship tasks, their content, and internship report structure. The main criterion for choosing the internship place is that it provides the student with a possibility to complete the internship tasks fully and efficiently.

Both study and qualification internships have a study course description that defines the aim of the study course, learning outcomes, internship tasks, and other information that should be included in the course description in accordance with the College guidelines.

	Study programme learning outcomes	1. Knows and understands general and public relations branch specific facts, theories, regularities and technologies	2. Is able to perform practical tasks in the public relations profession on the basis of an analytical approach	3. Is able to demonstrate skills that allow one to find creative solutions to public relations problems, discuss and provide arguments for practical issues and solutions with colleagues, clients and management	4. Is able to learn further independently, thus developing one's competences	5. Is able to work individually and as a team, to plan and organize, as well as assess and improve their own and other's work in order to perform specific tasks in the public relations profession	6. Is able to formulate, describe and analyse practical problems in the public relations profession, as well as is able to select and use various types of information for problem solving	7. Is able to contribute to the development of public relations industry, demonstrating an understanding of the role of the public relations profession in a broader social context
Internship tasks	General description of the organization	X	X				X	
	Description of internal communication in the organization	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Description of external communication in the organization	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Description of the extracurricular activities	X	X		X		X	X
Qualification internship tasks	General description of the organization	X	X				X	
	and external communication in the organization	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Description of integrated marketing communication in the organization	X		X	X		X	X
	Description of the out-of-class activities	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Individual task for preparing Qualification paper	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Fig. 7. Linking SP internship tasks to the learning outcomes of the SP

Fig. 7 shows that the internship tasks of the SP are linked to the learning outcomes of the SP. The figure shows only a part of the interrelation between the internship tasks and the outcomes of the SP, because each internship task is broader and deeper and it is reflected in the sub-topics of the internship tasks that are integrated in study course description and available in the Moodle system. To complete the internship tasks the student needs to apply their soft skills, digital skills, and professional skills identified in the image of the College graduate. Completing the internship task, preparing and defending the internship report require using and developing all these skills, thus fully achieving the outcomes of the SP.

2.5. Analysis and assessment of the topics of the final theses of the students, their relevance in the respective field, including the labour market, and the evaluations of the final theses.

A list of sample themes for qualification works is drawn up by the director of the SP consulting with the relevant methodological commission. The sample themes for the qualification works follow from

the content and outcomes of the SP. The list of sample themes for qualification works shall be approved by the Council.

Deadlines for the selection of the theme, elaboration and defense of the qualification work are approved by the director of the SP who informs the Study Department. The Study Department publishes the schedule on the College website and the director of the SP - in the Moodle system.

The student chooses the theme of the qualification work according to the approved list of sample themes or proposes another theme that is agreed with the supervisor and the director of the SP. The themes and supervisors of the qualification works shall be approved by the Council on the proposal of the director of the SP. Once the theme of the qualification work has been approved, it cannot be changed during the semester unless there is a valid reason.

Below in Fig. 8 are the themes of the qualification works chosen by the students and approved by the Council over the last two years:

Topic of the qualification paper in English
Usage of Public Relations Events for the Improvement of the External Communication in a Theatre Industry Company
The Improvement of the Web Page and Social Media Communication in a Municipal Tourism Institution
Usage of Web Page for the Improvement of a Company in a Telecommunications Industry
Usage of Influencers' Engagement for the Improvement of the External Communication for the Clients of a Pu blic Relations Company
Usage of Public Relations Tools in a Sports Society Campaigns
The Improvement of a Company Recognition in a Sports and Leisure Field Company
e Improvement of the External Communication in a Social Care Company
The Improvement of a Company Recognition in a Sport Field Company
The Improvement of the Home Page in an Association
The Improvement of the Home Page and Social Media Communication in the Latvian Institute
Usage of Public Relations Events for the Improvement of the Communication in a Cultural Industry Company

Fig. 8. Themes of the SP qualification works in the last two years

It can be seen that the research interest of the students was related to various aspects of internal and external communication, digital and social media communication, social responsibility activities and other issues, and this fully corresponds to the aim and learning outcomes of the SP.

Sample topics for qualification papers have been created based on current industry trends, employers' suggestions and students' observations during their qualification internships.

As shown in the table, the rating of the qualification papers during the reporting period is at a good level and the highest score trend is increasing, which indicates the stability of the study program.

Rating of qualification papers in study programme "Public Relations"									
Study year	Number of students	Mark of defence							Average rating
		10	9	8	7	6	5	4	
2013/ 2014	24	1	2	5	7	6	1	2	6,9
2014/ 2015	16	0	3	4	5	3	1	0	6,8
2015/ 2016	13	0	4	3	3	1	2	0	7,5
2016/ 2017	14	0	3	3	5	0	3	0	7,2
2017/ 2018	8	0	1	1	4	1	1	0	7
2018/ 2019	12	1	2	2	3	3	1	0	7,3

For the next period, the College Council has approved the following topic directions for qualification papers, and sample topics proposed therein are included in the respective study course description:

- internal or external communication;
- social relations campaigns or activities;
- social media and digital communication;
- media communication,
- visibility or image.

See Annex 15 for the table on the compliance of the study program with the National Education Standard.

See Annex 16 for a table on the compliance of the qualification awarded in the study program with the profession standard.

See Appendix X for a table on the compliance of the study program with the specific normative regulation of the respective branch, e.g., Psychologist Law, Medical Law, etc. (not applicable).

See Annex 17 for a mapping of study courses to achieve learning outcomes of a study program.

See Annex 18 for study program plan.

See Annex 19 for descriptions of the study courses in the study program.

2.6. Analysis and assessment of the outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students, graduates, and employers, and the use of these outcomes for the improvement of the content and quality of studies by providing the respective examples.

The College conducts two different **student surveys**:

1. at the end of each semester, a survey evaluating the work of the lecturers is carried out. This survey assesses the study course and its content, the requirements, correspondence to the course description, materials available in Moodle and the use of e-environment tools, as well as the objectivity of the assessment and the competencies of the instructors in the study course;
2. once a year, a survey on satisfaction with the SP and the study process at the College is conducted. In the survey, the students also evaluate the work of the director of the SP according to several criteria and work in general. Criteria such as accuracy of the provided information, effectiveness in solving problem situations and providing answers, accessibility for consultations both face-to-face and in the e-environment, and general communication culture are evaluated separately.

Overall, the results of the student survey show a positive trend in satisfaction with the SP and its content, academic staff, and the study environment and infrastructure of the College. The students also evaluate the quality of the work of the Study Department and the library and the accuracy and timeliness of provided information. Most students indicate that they are satisfied. The students mention prompt information, access to consultations, kindness, and an individual approach to each student as main advantages in various aspects.

Taking into account the results of student surveys:

- in some study courses, the planned learning outcomes and their evaluation criteria, as well as descriptions of independent assignments were improved to be more specific;
- the guidelines for the development of e-courses were changed, i.e., to make navigation and finding the necessary information faster and easier, the structure of the e-course and the

amount of compulsory information were changed;

- given a more detailed description of the procedure for appealing grades, summarizing all cases in a single regulation, i.e. the "Regulation on the Procedure of Studies and Examinations", and excluding, for example, appealing the result of the state final examination from the "Regulations on Individual Assignments";
- following the student surveys, the "Ethical and Academic Integrity Code" was drawn up to provide a more accurate vision of key concepts, principles and types of violation;
- changes were introduced to the academic staff - following negative feedback from the students, negotiations on development possibilities were held with some of the lecturers, discussing shortcomings in the work and agreeing on improvement of the work. In the reporting period, student survey results did not show a positive trend for some teachers, discussions were repeated, cooperation was terminated and new colleagues were invited;
- the opportunity was implemented to apply for various statements online, on the College website, and receive them via e-mail.

Each year, a **graduate survey** is conducted to find out the opinion of the graduates on the studies and possible improvements in the SP and on their plans for continuing the studies.

The results of the survey show that the overall satisfaction of the graduates with the studies has been evaluated as "good" and "very good". The least appreciated sections were related to library appropriateness, therefore, in recent years the educational literature topical to the SP was added to the library collection, and WI-FI access at the College, which has been significantly improved during the recent years.

As an advantage of the SP, the graduates have indicated a possibility to study in the e-environment, engaging guest lectures of well-known personalities, study tours, and the erudition and individual approach of the SP lecturers.

Most of the graduates indicated that they are planning to continue their studies at higher study levels in public relations or in other fields. According to the information available to the director of the SP, most graduates shortly after graduation continue their studies at the strategic partner UCEC (culture management or management studies program) or, if they continue their studies in the field of public relations, graduates mostly choose to continue at Turība University or RISEBA, less often – Rīga Stradiņš University or the University of Latvia. A very small number of graduates consider not continuing their studies.

Every year **an employer survey is conducted**, inviting them to fill in the internship supervisor's review (until 2018 it was a small survey in the internship diary) that aims to clarify the assessment of the trainee skills at the internship to prepare students for labor market requirements and find out the future prospects of the profession.

Potential employers are predominantly local governments, public relations agencies, culture and creative industry businesses and associations. In general, the potential employers have highly appreciated College students and mostly marked the first or second answer to the question, "How would you generally describe the trainees in recent years?":

1. good theoretical and practical training, capable of independently carrying out their duties immediately;
2. able to perform his/her duties after brief training/introduction to the workplace;
3. the trainees were well-trained in theory but lacked practical skills;
4. the trainees had good practical skills but poor theoretical knowledge;
5. it is difficult to provide a general assessment because the trainees are very different.

Likewise, the employers are asked to assess the extent to which College trainees achieved the

learning outcomes defined by the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) *(explanation available at http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LKI_limenu_aprakstu_tabula_2017.pdf)*. The dominant responses in recent years have been - fully achieved, rather achieved.

Summarizing the results of the employer survey, it can be concluded that the employers consider the knowledge, skills and competences provided by the SP to its students as important and necessary and it means that the SP is designed in a well-considered and best-orientated manner. However, theoretical knowledge of the students should be improved in further implementation of the SP.

The survey asks employers to provide their forecasts of the demand for the profession and professionals in the relevant field in the labor market over the next six years, as well as of other necessary occupations in Latvia over the next six years. Almost everyone gives an affirmative answer, stating that the public relations specialist profession will not lose its relevance and will be in demand. Other mentioned professionals include IT specialists, digital marketing specialists, human resources specialists, and business professionals.

2.7. Provide the assessment of the options of the incoming and outgoing mobility of the students, the dynamics of the number of the used opportunities, and the recognition of the study courses acquired during the mobility.

Part II, Chapter 5, Section 5.2 describes the arrangements for attracting foreign students to the College through the Lifelong Learning Program *Erasmus+*. The same program also applies to College students who can use study or internship mobility in the same way.

The short duration of studies is the main obstacle to student mobility. The primary target audience for outgoing mobility is full-time students, but as there is a shortage of matriculated students in this form of study in recent years, this mobility is not being implemented. During the reference period, there were no students participating in the outgoing study mobility and only five students took part in internship mobility (see Figure 9).
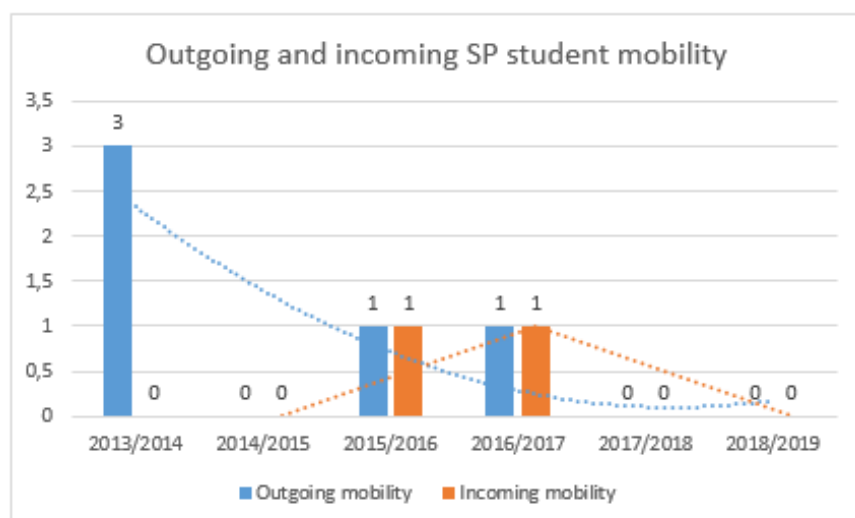

Fig. 9. Outgoing and incoming SP student mobility in the reference period

However, in pursuit of solutions and after discussions with the students, the College has initiated the following practice:

1. The students participate in the internship, not study mobility, adapting their individual internship plan;
2. Mobility is carried out within the framework of the projects where the students have an individual mobility plan.

For example, as noted above, from 2016 to 2019, the College collaborated with the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, within the framework of the Erasmus + Lifelong Learning Program project "Higher education student and staff mobility between Program and Partner Countries". The cooperation mainly took place within the framework of three similar study programs – Legal Science, Information Technology and Public Relations. The experience exchange visits within the project included guest lectures, conferences and seminars, and other activities.

During the spring semester of 2017/2018, several College students and academic staff went to L.N. Gumilyov University to participate in the conference and activities, gave scientific and practical seminars, and presented their research. Two SP students presented a study on the online communications environment of companies in Latvia that they carried out together with associate professor Inga Milēviča. The students emphasized that they had invaluable experience in presenting and establishing international contacts.

In the spring semester of the 2018/2019 academic year, a delegation from Kazakhstan visited the College, and four L.N. Gumilyov University students were studying in the College within the study mobility project framework. For a detailed description of the attraction and enrolment of foreign students at the College, see: Part II, Chapter 5, Section 5.2.

Although so far both the International Relations and Erasmus + Coordinator and the Director of the SP have been informing and motivating the students for internships or study mobility, a minimal number of students choose to participate. Therefore, the search for solutions and opportunities for wider use of student mobility will continue.

See Annex 10 for a summary of statistics on incoming and outgoing student mobility during the reference period.

III - DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME (3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme)

3.1. Assessment of the compliance of the resources and provision (study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision) with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the learning outcomes to be achieved by providing the respective examples. Whilst carrying out the assessment, it is possible to refer to the information provided for in the criteria set forth in Part II, Chapter 3, sub-paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3.

As only one study program "Public Relations" is implemented within the College field of study "Information and Communication Sciences", see the assessment of resources and provision in Part II, Chapter 3, Sections 3.1 to 3.3.

3.2. Assessment of the study provision and scientific support, including the resources provided within the cooperation with other science institutes and institutions of higher education (applicable to the doctoral study programmes).

III - DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME (4. Teaching Staff)

4.1. Analysis and assessment of the changes to the composition of the teaching staff over the reporting period and their impact on the study quality.

Comparing the qualifications of the academic staff involved in the SP during the previous accreditation period (2013/2014) with the current qualifications (2019/2020), it can be seen that the overall trend has improved - the number of academic staff with corresponding qualifications and professional experience involved in the implementation of the SP has increased.

Currently, seven associate professors are involved in the implementation of the SP, five of them with a doctoral degree or currently studying at doctorate level. Three lecturers with a master's degree and professional experience in the branch corresponding to the study course are employed as lecturers.

Likewise, the total number of visiting lecturers has increased, eight guest lecturers were employed, two of whom have doctoral degrees.

In total, 18 academic staff are involved in the implementation of the SP, of which 10 are College employees and eight are guest lecturers.

This trend points to the increased quality of the SP and its close relation to the realities of the public relations field, as the academic staff is not only academically educated in the areas relevant to the study course, but also has professional experience, which is an essential cornerstone of the professional higher education implemented in the College.

See Annex 34 for the comparison of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study program.

4.2. Assessment of the compliance of the qualification of the teaching staff members (academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants) involved in the implementation of the study programme with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments. Provide information on how the qualification of the teaching staff members contributes to the achievement of the learning outcomes.

The qualification of the staff of the SP of the field of study is consistent with the implementation of

the objectives and tasks of the College. The greatest value of the College is its staff, who shares common values, research and a strong link with the industry, pedagogical talent, and teamwork. One of the College's strategic tasks is to provide a professional team of academic staff for the study process, who bases the quality of the study program and the implementation of the study process in science and research, hands-on industry experience, and close collaboration with employers and strategic partner higher education institutions.

To achieve this, the College continuously encourages academic staff to improve their professional and pedagogical qualifications through:

- Continuing professional development:
    - at least one in-service training opportunity (internship, traineeships, in-company research, work in the organization, etc.) in a Latvian or foreign company or organization, a lecturer is provided yearly, who has no practical experience in the branch in the last six years or does not have it at all;
    - each semester, activities within the framework of a specialized study course are organized with the participation of branch professionals: guest lecture, seminar, creative workshop, study trip, etc.;
    - continuous access to extra-curricular activities organized by the College, including the lecture series "Zvaigžņu vieslekcijas" ("Guest lectures of the stars"), guest lectures, Business Forum, international scientific conference "Emerging Trends in Economics, Culture and Humanities (etECH)", teaching methodological conference, etc.;
    - to broaden the horizons and to exchange informal experiences, the College organizes discussions on a variety of topics within the framework of the "Diskusijas pie kafijas tases" ("Discussions with a cup of coffee") project.
- Continuing teaching refresher training:
    - the strategic goal of the college is to ensure that by 2023 all the lecturers have a pedagogical education or an updated certificate in compliance with Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 569 of 11 September 2018 569 "Regulations on the Education and Professional Qualifications of Teachers and the Procedure for the Professional Development of Teachers";
    - every year the College organizes methodological seminars or summer schools on current topics face-to-face or in the e-environment;
    - every year a teaching methodological conference is organized;
    - constantly provided video instructions and regular individual consultations for the development and improvement of the study course and regular individual consultations for structuring the e-course.

10 representatives of the elected academic staff of the College are involved in the implementation of the SP, their courses form 66 credits out of a total of 80 credits of the SP, including study internship, qualification internship, and qualification work, accounting for 82,5% of the total volume of the course.

The academic staff involved in the implementation of the SP has the qualification corresponding to the specifics of the SP and the requirements of the regulatory enactments and this ensures achievement of the set outcomes of the SP. A detailed analysis of the lecturers is available in the previous section.

4.3. Information on the number of the scientific publications of the academic staff members, involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme, as published

during the reporting period by listing the most significant publications published in Scopus or WoS CC indexed journals. As for the social sciences, humanitarian sciences, and the science of art, the scientific publications published in ERIH+ indexed journals may be additionally specified (if applicable).

4.4. Information on the participation of the academic staff, involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme, in scientific projects as project managers or prime contractors/ subproject managers/ leading researchers by specifying the name of the relevant project, as well as the source and the amount of the funding. Provide information on the reporting period (if applicable).

4.5. Provide examples of the involvement of the academic staff in the scientific research and/or artistic creation activities both at national and at international level (in the fields related to the content of the study programme), as well as the use of the obtained information in the study process.

As only one study program "Public Relations" is implemented within the College field of study "Information and Communication Sciences", see participation of the academic staff in research in Part II, Chapter 4, Section 4.4.

4.6. Assessment of the cooperation between the teaching staff members by specifying the mechanisms used to promote the cooperation and ensure the interrelation between the study courses/ modules. Specify also the proportion of the number of the students and the teaching staff within the study programme (at the moment of the submission of the Self-Assessment Report).

The implementation of the SP ensures proportionality between the academic staff of the professional and the academic environment, thus creating a well-balanced staff of both academic and legal backgrounds, which contributes to the achievement of the aim and the outcomes set for the SP.

The cooperation of the academic staff is formed through methodological committee meetings, individual discussions with the director of the SP, discussions with other lecturers, and joint meetings of the College lecturers where various issues in the College, higher education and professional field are discussed.

SP lecturers cooperate in implementing and updating the content of the study course, coordinating topics to avoid unnecessary duplication. The lecturers also collaborate within the research groups, offering ideas for sample themes of the qualification works, SP improvement, or College

development. At the same time, the lecturers are jointly involved in developing extra-curricular activities for students, for example, providing student study trips to employers (often to their own workplace) or engaging industry guest lecturers in a Business Forum, creative workshop, or a guest lecture on some branch-related topic.

The academic staff is also represented on the Council, in various project work groups, and in the activities that promote international relations.

On the initiative of the academic staff, a discussion and ideas exchange forum has been created in the Moodle course "AK Administration".

Comparing the total number of students in the SP with the number of academic staff involved in the implementation of the SP, the ratio of students to academic staff at the time of submitting the self-evaluation report is 27 to 18, which makes 1.5.

Annexes

III. Description of the Study Programme - 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme		
Compliance of the joint study programme with the provisions of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (table)		
Statistics on the students over the reporting period	Annex_14_Statistics_on_Students_of_the_SP_SA.pdf	14_Pielikums_Statistika_par_SP_studejosajiem_SA.pdf

III. Description of the Study Programme - 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof		
Compliance of the study programme with the State Education Standard	Annex_15_Compliance_of_the_SP_with_State_Education_Standard_SA.docx	15_Pielikums_SP_atbilstiba_valsts_izglitibas_standartam_SA.docx
Compliance of the qualification to be acquired upon completion of the study programme with the professional standard (if applicable)	Annex_16_Mapping_Qualification_Profession_Standard_SA.xlsx	16_Pielikums_Kvalifikacijas_atbilstiba_profesiju_standartam_kartejums_SA.xlsx
Compliance of the study programme with the specific regulatory framework applicable to the relevant field (if applicable)		
Mapping of the study courses/ modules for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study programme	Annex_17_Mapping_Learning_Outcomes_Study_Courses_SA.xlsx	17_Pielikums_Studiju_kursu_studiju_rezultatu_kartejums_SA.xlsx
Curriculum of the study programme (for each type and form of the implementation of the study programme)	Annex_18_Study_Programme_Plan_SA.pdf	18_Pielikums_Studiju_programmas_plans_SA.pdf
Descriptions of the study courses/ modules	Annex_19_Study_Course_Descriptions_SA.zip	19_Pielilkums_Studiju_kursu_apraksti_SA.zip

Description of the Study Direction - Other mandatory attachments		
Sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme.	Annex_20_Diploma_template_SA.pdf	20_Pielikums_Diploma_paraugs_SA.pdf

Description of the Study Programme - Other mandatory attachments		
Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued	Annex_21_Agreements_Case_of_Liquidation_SA.zip	21_Pielikums_Ligumi_ar_AII_partrauksanas_gadijuma_SA.zip
Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme	Annex_22_Proof_of_Loss_Compensation.docx	22_Pielikums_Apliecinajums_par_zaudejumu_kompensaciju.docx
Confirmation of the higher education institution/ college that the teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language according to European language levels (see the levels under www.europass.lv), if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.	Annex_24_Statement_on_Foreign_Language_Skills_SA.pdf	24_Pielikums_Apliecinajums_macibspeku_svesvaloda_SA.pdf
If the study programmes in the study direction subject to the assessment are doctoral study programmes, a confirmation that at least five teaching staff members with doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field or sub-field of science, in which the study programme has intended to award a scientific degree.		
If academic study programmes are implemented within the study direction, a document confirming that the academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the provisions set out in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause three of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education		
Sample (or samples) of the study agreement	Annex_25_Study_Agreement_AK_2020.docx	25_Pielikums_Studiju_liguma_paraugs_AK_2020.docx
If academic study programmes for less than 250 full-time students are implemented within the study direction, the opinion of the Council for Higher Education shall be attached in compliance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.		