



Department of Doctoral Studies

Doctoral study programme “Social Sciences”

Code: 51380 – Law, 51312 – Political Science, 51314 – Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work, 51321 – Communication Culture and Multimedia, 51345 – Health Management; 51345 – Business Management and Economics

Description of the Study Programme

APPROVED
at Rīga Stradiņš University Senate meeting
on 21.02.2023

**INCLUSION OF THE LICENSED STUDY PROGRAMME IN THE STUDY
DIRECTION “Management and Administration, Real Estate Management”
ON ACCREDITATION SHEET**

Riga, 2023

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Introduction. Challenges of the interdisciplinary DSP in determining the study direction

When developing the new doctoral study programme “Social Sciences” of Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU), emphasis was placed on three main aspects: 1) development of study programmes in accordance with the modern science development and labour market requirements; 2) consolidation and reduction of fragmentation of study programmes; 3) increasing the importance of interdisciplinarity in education, science, research, and labour market.

The study programme is created by combining the programmes “Law”, “Communication Culture and Multimedia,” “Political Science,” “Business Management and Economics” and “Sociology,” which until now were implemented separately. New and demanded labour market focuses were also defined, which include health management, social work, social anthropology. This will increase competitiveness, labour market opportunities and innovation to enable students to work in interdisciplinary and international teams.

The programme was developed based on the conceptual report “On the Introduction of the New Doctoral Studies Model in Latvia”¹, which includes both the requirements for introduction of the new doctoral model and the planned transition to cyclical accreditation of higher education institutions, as well as the implementation of cross-sectoral studies and studies within the framework of doctoral studies.

The RSU programme consolidated five doctoral study programmes “Law”, “Political Science”, “Sociology” and “Communication Culture and Multimedia”, “Management Science” to date, as well as identified one new sub-programme “Health Management” corresponding to different study directions accredited by RSU.

By submitting the programme for licensing, taking into account the opinion of provided in MoES letter No_4-6e/22/1760 of 13 June 2022, RSU was guided by the requirements laid down in Sub-Paragraph 12.4 of Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 795 of 11 December 2018 “Regulations Regarding Licensing of Study Programmes”, namely RSU submitted an application to the AIC indicating the “title of the study direction corresponding to the study programme”. Despite the overall interdisciplinary nature of the programme (both the content of the programme and the design and objectives of the programme) and the fact that the programme is created within a specific group of a sector, namely “Social Sciences”, it is nevertheless not unambiguously possible and also desirable to define in substance only one study direction for the programme. Determination of one direction, as currently required by Section 1(1¹) of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, as well as Section 55² of this Law, from the perspective of the new doctoral model is not possible in substance.

According to the Salzburg principles, it is the development of cross-sectoral research that will make it possible to achieve the aim of responding quickly and effectively to the challenges and needs of the labour market. Today, each single sector of social sciences is no longer able to comprehensively improve the impact on societal processes. When developing the new study programme “Social Sciences”, particular emphasis was placed on increasing the role of social sciences in research by combining specific knowledge and competences of sectors and sub-sectors. Improving the impact of social sciences research is one of the priorities of the StP and follows from the aims of the European Commission *Horizon 2020* programme. The development of interdisciplinary doctoral study programmes and thus the integration of fields of science reinforce the impact pathways of research, thus bringing the potential to promote policy-making, the use of scientific evidence in strategic communication, as well as to improve the wider use of infrastructure and research data in a cross-sectoral perspective, demonstrating the primary capacity to promote

1 [Order of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 345 \(25.06.2020\): On the conceptual report “On the Introduction of the New Doctoral Studies Model in Latvia”](#)

the development of industrial research. The development of DSP “Social Sciences” was based on compliance with those considerations.

Considering the interdisciplinary nature of DSP “Social Sciences”, which, among other things, is in line with the settings of the conceptual report “On the Introduction of the New Doctoral Studies Model in Latvia” (Order No 345 of the Cabinet of Ministers (25.06.2020): On the conceptual report “On the Introduction of the New Doctoral Studies Model in Latvia”), licencing the programme in one study direction created challenges for RSU. When developing the new study programme, based on the new doctoral model, RSU certifies that determining a direction does not contribute to research and development, despite the fact that research is the basis of the doctoral study programme.

As MoES has recognised in its letter No 4-6e/22/1760 of 13 June 2022, by developing and also licencing the new StP, RSU pilots within the research project implemented by the Ministry. In addition, *“The Ministry of Education and Science has confirmed that work is underway on the concept outlined in the report, namely that in the medium term, in view of the planned introduction of the new model of doctoral studies, as well as the transition to cyclical university accreditation, which will include changes to licensing regulations regarding licensing of doctoral study programmes, the Ministry will propose the abandonment of study directions.”* It follows that in its working practices RSU potentially tests in practice the practical functioning of the solutions contained in the concepts of these reforms.

At the same time, despite the fact that the content of the new programme corresponds to several study directions, the current regulation clearly indicates the necessity to define a study direction. Taking into account the relevant requirements, as well as the opinion and recommendations of the Study Quality Commission, the study direction “Management and Administration, Real Estate Management” was determined for the DSP “Social Sciences”.

The QAHE Study Quality Commission has concluded that all the DSP sub-programmes, in their content, comply with the conditions for eligibility of the sub-programmes², respectively, the StP sub-programmes have been created within the StP, their content fits the StP as an organic component thereof (in terms of the common content component) and correspond to the same group of the field of science as the StP, respectively, the group of the social sciences sector³, since, according to the objectives, tasks and learning outcomes the sub-programme “Law” falls within the law sector, sub-programme “Political Science” – political science sector, sub-programme “Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work” – sociology and social work science sector, sub-programme “Communication Culture and Multimedia” – media and communication science sector, sub-programme “Health Management”⁴ and sub-programme “Business Management and Economics” – economic and business science sector, all belonging to the group of social sciences sector.

Having evaluated the resources of the university, the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the StP, it can be concluded that higher resources were involved to the study direction “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management” in the relevant sub-programmes, as well as “Sociology, Politics and Anthropology”. Guided by the main research

² Section 55(1) of the Law on Higher Education Institutions

³ Paragraph 1 and Annex to Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 595 of 27 September 2022 “Regulations on Latvian Groups of Fields of Sciences, Fields and Sub-Fields of Science” (hereinafter referred to as the Classification of Fields of Science of Latvia)

⁴ Taking into account the last three digits “345” of the potential code of the sub-programme in the Latvian Education Classification, which corresponds to the group of educational programmes “Management and Administration” (Annex 1, Table 2 of Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 of 13 June 2017 “Regulations on the Classification of the Latvian Education” (hereinafter referred to as the Classification of the Latvian Education)), the title and content, which is directed towards mastering of management competences, knowledge and skills in the field of health care

directions of RSU Social Science Platform, it can be concluded that two of them (international relations and politics, strategic communication, and social anthropology) correspond to the study direction “Sociology, Politics and Anthropology”, one – to the study direction “Management and Administration, Real Estate Management” (international business and economic development) and the Law direction (international and national legal framework and legislation).

Taking into account both the resources deployed and the defined main lines of research in the field of social sciences, provided that the current regulation requires the definition of one study direction, it can be concluded that a more appropriate study direction is “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management”.

The StP is based on various branches of social sciences with a focus on matters important to Latvian society. The new RSU programme provides an opportunity for learners to address issues requiring a multifaceted approach, expanding traditional boundaries of social science sectors and using approaches from the sectors of law, political science, business, health management, communication, sociology, social anthropology and social work. The StP approach is based on common learning of scientific foundations for all and on the choice of methods relevant to the subject.

As part of the StP, doctoral students will be given the opportunity to engage in international research projects, learn and develop new research approaches and methods, and create new cross-sectoral knowledge. During the doctoral thesis drafting stage, doctoral students will be offered cooperation opportunities with several doctoral thesis supervisors, which will ensure representation of different sectors according to the topic of the doctoral thesis. The new doctoral StP offers stronger cooperation and scientific mentoring of doctoral students and doctoral thesis supervisors.

Both Latvian and foreign cooperation partners have provided support to the StP. Steven Blockmans, director of the Centre for European Policy Studies (Belgium), has expressed support for the StP, pointing out that merging of several disciplines will contribute to the modernising the study process. S. Blockmans also appreciated the inclusion of study transversal skills in the StP study courses.

Professor Karl Harald Søvig, President of the European Association of Health Law (Norway), has pointed out that the StP provides a unique opportunity to strengthen cross-sectoral research, which is currently the most demanded research in the market, highlighting the involvement of doctoral students in the preparation and implementation of international projects while promoting faster inclusion of future scientists in the international research family.

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia has expressed support for the interdisciplinary doctoral study programme, indicating that it is in line with both the spirit and nature of the reforms currently implemented by the Ministry and the policy for implementation of the new model of doctoral studies.

The quality of the StP is appreciated in the joint opinion of StP experts. Experts have assessed compliance of the programme with industry trends in European Union countries and in the world, as well as the informative, methodological, material and technical base of studies as outstanding. The promotion and provision of scientific research activities by teaching staff and the mechanism for implementing the StP were assessed also as “outstanding”.

Leading experts from the United States, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands were involved in creating the programme, which also enabled the development of the programme aimed at international cooperation and internationalisation.

A strong team of RSU lecturers and researchers was involved in the creation of the programme (for example, RSU Assistant Professor Dr.sc.pol. Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova, political science and international relations opinion and research leader, RSU visiting lecturer Dr.sc.pol. Gunda Reire, Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, RSU Associate

Professor PhD Klāvs Sedlenieks, co-founder of the Latvian Association of Anthropologists, RSU Associate Professor Dr.sc.pol. Māris Andžāns, Director of the Centre for Geopolitical Studies, RSU visiting researcher Dr. Rico Isaacs, Associate Professor of the University of Lincoln (United Kingdom), RSU lecturer Dr.iur. Inga Kudeikina, RSU Professor Dr.sc.inf. Sergejs Kruks and RSU Professor Dr.oec. Tatjana Muravska and others).

Basic information on the study direction

Aims and tasks of the study direction

The **aim** of the Management, Administration and Real Estate Management study direction is to train highly qualified specialists in the field of economics and business management for Latvia, the European Union and the entire world community and its management processes. Achieving this aim is ensured by providing students with the opportunity to receive theoretical and practical knowledge, skills and competences relevant to both the field (economics and business) and interdisciplinary interaction, using the results of fundamental and practical research in several scientific disciplines.

1. Compliance of the aim of the study direction with the scope of activities of the higher education institution: The scope of activities of RSU is higher education and scientific research in the field of health care and social sciences. All study programmes included in this study direction are in the field of social sciences, and the graduates of these study programmes obtain academic, professional and scientific degrees of higher education, therefore the aim of the study direction - to train highly qualified specialists in the field of economics and business management - fully complies with the scope of activities of RSU.

2. Compliance of the aim of the study direction with the strategic development directions of the higher education institution: RSU strategic development directions are defined in the RSU Development Strategy 2022–2027, in particular in the mission, vision, main development goals, as well as horizontal development goals formulated in the strategy, which are taken into account in the implementation of the aim of the study direction and in the strategic and organisational management of the direction. The implementation and development of the study direction and the study programmes included in it take place in close connection and in accordance with these strategic development directions of RSU at the levels of strategic planning, tactical actions and operational performance of activities: compliance of the aim of the study direction with the mission of RSU - to train highly qualified specialists in the field of health care and social sciences for Europe and the world, so that the knowledge, skills, competence and attitude obtained during the studies correspond to the highest EU requirements and humanist traditions and create a stable basis for lifelong learning.

Graduates of the study programmes included in the study direction are high-quality specialists in the field of social sciences, who ensure the management and development of Latvian, European and world society and its governance processes.

This is evidenced by the study applications of potential students or interested parties, as well as the professional careers and activities of existing students and graduates of the study programmes of the study direction at the level of Latvian, European and world economic and business management. Among those interested in the study programmes of the study direction (those who apply for studies), students and graduates, there are many middle and high-level specialists and managers of local and international companies. Thus, the aim of the study direction, which both attracts high-quality specialists to studies and ensures their training for the European and world society, promotes RSU's strategic mission in the world.

Compliance of the aim of the study direction with the RSU vision: RSU is an advanced, prestigious university recognised in Europe and across the world, the main value of which is a person and which provides high-quality and exportable research-based higher education. The modernity of the study direction and the study programmes included in it is characterised by continuous improvement of the study programmes, their content, knowledge transfer and knowledge co-creation methods and preservation of topicality in accordance with the latest trends in higher education, national economy and labour market, which, in turn, ensures high quality of the study process and learning outcomes and hence the prestige. This improvement takes place both by updating the descriptions of study courses, learning outcomes to be achieved, topics, literature used in study courses, methods used in classes, assessment methods, and by regularly improving the qualifications of the teaching staff of the study direction in internal (RSU Centre for Educational Growth, experience exchange meetings at the level of study programmes, departments and faculties of the social sciences block) and external seminars, trainings, conferences. The provision of research-based higher education implemented in the study programmes of the study direction is evidenced by the large number of involved lecturers with a doctoral degree, the number of local and international visiting lecturers involved in the study process, the use of scientific research results in the implementation of study courses, and the active participation of teaching staff and students of the study direction in international scientific conferences.

The international recognition and high-quality exportable higher education of the study direction and its study programmes are evidenced by the participation of the teaching staff of the study direction in international scientific and academic cooperation projects, European and global higher education and science networks, invitations from foreign universities to guest lectures, foreign visiting lecturers' applications for guest lectures in the programmes of the study direction, as well as the interest of foreign students (applications) and their studies in the programmes of this study direction mainly international placement within the framework of the student exchange programme.

Compliance of the aim of the study direction with the main development goals and horizontal development goals of RSU:

•Innovative studies in a modern environment - the goal of the study direction "to train highly qualified specialists in the field of economics and business management for Latvia, the European Union and the entire world community and its management processes" is implemented, taking into account this RSU first main development goal basically with the bottom-up method, namely, in the study programmes included in the study direction, their courses and course classes, tasks, materials, evaluation, special attention is paid to the provision of both innovative study elements and modern study environment, which is achieved in the following way - regular review and updating of study course descriptions, including updating and supplementing literature used and other modern materials (business games, video materials, interactive online tools), methods of knowledge transfer and co-creation, deliberate interdisciplinary analysis of issues a course topics, organisation of lecturers' experience exchange at the level of study programmes, departments and faculties of the social sciences block on a regular basis, cooperation with the student union, cooperation with students also in the form of assessment of course implementation and feedback, active and extensive use of e-studies and interactive online environment tools, involvement of visiting lecturers, study visits to companies and organisations, study placement in companies, closer practical cooperation with employers in the basic study process (in addition to guest lectures, some programmes also organise, for example, solving business problems in the study process), which makes the study environment modern and more dynamic by often bringing it outside the university auditorium and closer to practical business, and in the development and defence of diploma paper (study programmes ensure that students consult with industry specialists of the relevant field in the

development of the paper, and industry representatives participate in the defence of the diploma papers);

- health, life and human sciences research - this main development goal of RSU is achieved in all study courses also in the field of social sciences and in this study direction, maintaining a clear emphasis and orientation on improving the quality of life and well-being of people (individuals and society) and practical use of knowledge, including, for example, commercialisation of ideas, thus achieving the aforesaid goal of the study direction;
- social responsibility for sustainable development of the university and society - this goal of RSU horizontal development is essentially (in knowledge transfer) integrated in the content of study courses of the direction (social equality and welfare issues and their implementation solutions from several points of view are studied in several study courses), as well as this goal is achieved by 19 teaching staff of the study direction performing their scientific activities, participating in conferences, seminars and presenting and publishing the results of their research to the general public both in Latvia and in the world;
- twinning for integration into the labour market - for the compliance of the goal of the study direction to this goal of RSU horizontal development, see the compliance assessment of the first RSU main development goal, especially the section on modern study environment, which includes close and expanded cooperation of the study process with the labour market;
- internationalisation and reputation for international recognition - the implementation of the study direction takes into account this fifth RSU horizontal development goal, promoting the involvement of academic staff of the study direction programmes in the international cooperation - guest lectures in foreign universities, international projects and other international cooperation programmes, as well as increasing the number of courses taught in the study direction in English, which can be offered to foreign students.

At the same time, this goal is consciously and closely taken into account, also realising that the implementation of study programmes and achievement of learning outcomes in each study course is more effective with the international practical experience of the respective lecturer, for example, in research and other academic cooperation projects involving foreign partners.

The compliance of the aim of the study direction with the needs and the development trends of the society and the national economy is clearly substantiated by the results of many labour market researches (Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia and State Employment Agency of the Republic of Latvia, Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia, LDDK (Employers' Confederation of Latvia), Prakse.lv, Junior Chamber International, etc.) on the professions and skills required in the labour market, which include all skills and professions to be acquired as a result of graduating from the study programmes included in the field of study.

In addition, the aim of the study direction, the direction programmes and the learning outcomes thereof are developed and regularly updated, based on the needs and the development trends of the society and the national economy, to train highly qualified specialists in the field of economics and business management for Latvia, the European Union and the entire world community and its management processes. The aim of the study direction, as well as the activities of implementation and achievement of the aim are fully coordinated with the scope of activity of RSU, RSU strategic documents and the needs and the development trends of the society and the national economy.

For a more detailed description and practical examples of the aim of the study direction and the activities of modernity and prestige, implementation of research-based higher education study programmes, as well as international recognition, including higher education export, which clearly confirm the compliance of the aim of the study direction and its implementation with the vision and directions of RSU strategic development, as well as with the needs and the development trends

of the society and the national economy, see the descriptions of the study programmes included in the study direction.

The study programmes included in the study direction

Until now, RSU study direction Management, Administration and Real Estate Management included six study programmes – three academic Bachelor’s study programmes, including one new study programme that was developed within a project under the EU Specific Support Objective 8.2.1, two professional Master’s study programmes and one doctoral study programme:

- 1) Academic Bachelor’s study programme International Marketing and Advertising;
- 2) Academic Bachelor’s study programme International Business and Sustainable Economy;
- 3) Academic Bachelor’s study programme International Business and Start-up Entrepreneurship;
- 4) Professional Master’s study programme International Business and Law;
- 5) Professional Master’s study programme Management of International Marketing and Business;
- 6) Doctoral study programme “Business Management and Economics”.

Within a SO project a new doctoral study programme “Social Sciences” was licenced to reduce fragmentation, which combined six doctoral study programmes of the social block, which existed so far, incl. the doctoral study programme “Business Management and Economics”. By implementing the RSU Plan for development and consolidation of study programmes until 31 November 2023, it was decided to close this programme.

Compliance of the study programme with the study direction

RSU has effectively developed critical mass of research and diversity of research in recent years. In 2019, RSU achieved a very good scientific assessment in the international evaluation of the activities of scientific institutions laid down in the Law on Scientific Activity and was recognised as a strong scientific institution at international level (from 3 to 5 points). The potential for the development of a social sciences platform was particularly appreciated by international experts and was used when developing the doctoral study programme “Social Sciences”.⁵

Rīga Stradiņš University Development Strategy 2022-2027 provides for the internationalisation of the university and promotion of reputation in the international space as one of the horizontal strategic development goals. At the same time, it should be noted that the new strategy will be based on digitalisation and digital transformation as one of the pillars, which will also be reflected in the new doctoral study programme.

The Development Strategy of Rīga Stradiņš University Scientific Institution, which provides for developing scientific activities and research in a number of directions, is important. One of them is the increase in the number of doctoral students and therefore young researchers, as well as the increase in the number and quality of scientific publications, scientific conferences and scientific projects. This will enable the university to move up in international university rankings and will also broadly strengthen RSU as a science university. The new doctoral study programme “Social Sciences” plays a crucial role in the context of these and other science promotion directions – doctoral graduates will be the future foundation for academic staff of the university. The

⁵ *International Evaluation of Scientific Institutions Activity. Panel Report: Social Science* (2021). Obtained from: <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/media/10717/download> [viewed on 01.02.2023].

foundation put in over the next few years will shape the direction in which the university will move in research and pedagogy in the decades to come.

The development of the direction of international and cross-sectoral research, which underpins the development of the new social sciences study programme, is essential. Establishing cooperation agreements with foreign universities, attracting foreign lecturers and researchers permanently or for individual elements of the learning and research process is a task that is successfully addressed in the programme.

New study programme in the context of development of RSU study programmes

Progress is already being observed in the development of RSU social sciences study programmes. For example, in 2019, the first programme of social sciences implemented in English, Academic Master's Study Programme "International Governance and Diplomacy", opened at RSU, where students from five continents began their studies in academic year 2021/2022 (in 2021, there was the first graduation of this study programme). A Bachelor's study program in English "International Business and Start-up Entrepreneurship" was licensed and opened in 2020, and a new Master's study programme in English "Russia and Eurasia Studies" was licensed in 2021. The last two study programmes were developed and licensed under SO 8.2.1. The doctoral study programme "Social Sciences" is a legitimate step towards continuity, also in the context of internationalisation and interdisciplinarity.

The new study programme is fully in line with the RSU's development strategy on the development of doctoral studies, the increase in the number of defended doctoral theses and, consequently, the reproduction of researchers and lecturers, as well as the improvement of scientific results in general, in particular the development of good interdisciplinary scientific publications and the attraction of new scientific projects. This set of actions will also contribute to improving the results of RSU's international competitiveness, including a place in international rankings of higher education institutions.

The interdisciplinary doctoral study programme "Social Sciences" equally corresponds to all the study directions, in which the joint programmes have been implemented so far, namely:

- "Law",
- "Sociology, Politics and Anthropology",
- "Information and Communication Sciences",
- "Management, Administration and Real Estate Management".

Bachelor, master and doctoral degree study programmes are already being implemented in all directions, including doctoral study programmes "Business Management and Economics", "Communication Culture and Multimedia", "Political Science", "Sociology" and "Law".

The development potential of modern interdisciplinary programmes and the development of interdisciplinary content depend on the promotion of cross-sectoral research, which cannot be achieved by narrowing the choice of directions. At the same time, labour market trends and needs should be noted, which determine the demand for cross-sectoral research and studies. The various sectors of the economy require research not only in the specific field of science, but also cross-sectoral research involving widely used knowledge and skills.

Looking at the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the requirements of Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 795 of 11 December 2018 "Regulations Regarding Licensing of Study Programmes" (available in [Latvian](#), [English](#)) for determining one direction for a doctoral study programme in the context of the Law on Scientific Activity (available in [Latvian](#), [English](#)), it can be concluded that Section 8(1)(1) of the Law on Scientific Activity provides that a scientist has the

right to freely choose the direction and methods of scientific research. The aim of the programme, in line with the new doctoral studies model, is also to strengthen the capacity of scientists and develop interdisciplinary research. On the one hand, the Law on Scientific Activity opens up the possibility to ensure the activities of a scientist not only in specific fields and sub-fields of science, but also in groups of fields of sciences. In accordance with Section 28(3)(4) of the Law on Scientific Activity, institutions of higher education have been granted the right to perform scientific activity (to issue scientific articles, to implement projects, contract research, etc.) in groups of fields of sciences in conformity with the strategic specialisation of the institution of higher education determined by the founder of the institution of higher education. In particular, the Law on Scientific Activity essentially supports the cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral research approach, in particular by making it possible to take advantage of the development of the direction of a group of fields of sciences in research. A new model of typology of higher education institutions also emphasises that division among groups of fields of sciences does not strengthen the development of interdisciplinary programmes. On the other hand, both the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 795 of 11 December 2018 “Regulations Regarding Licensing of Study Programmes” narrow the relevant possibilities by imposing a content restriction in the form of a study direction.

Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 595 of 27 September 2022 “Regulations on Latvian Groups of Fields of Sciences, Fields and Sub-Fields of Science” strengthens the development of interdisciplinary science. In particular, the regulations provide for the possibility of acting within a group of a field of science, even more so, by developing cross-sectoral social sciences specifically provided for in these regulations, for example, in Paragraph 5.9.

According to the conceptual report “On the Introduction of the New Doctoral Studies Model in Latvia”, the main element of doctoral studies is original scientific research or doctoral theoretical research conducted by a doctoral student. Consequently, doctoral study programmes cannot be made equivalent to Bachelor’s and Master’s study programmes. Nor can their substantive assessment be based on principles similar to Master’s or Bachelor’s programmes.

When developing the new study programme, based on the new doctoral model, RSU certifies that determining a direction does not contribute to research and development, despite the fact that research is the basis of the doctoral study programme.

The report indicates that the regulatory framework for licensing a new doctoral study programme outside a study direction and within the framework of a doctoral school will come into force from 2022, while the regulatory framework for accreditation of a doctoral school will come into force from 2025. When developing the programme, RSU was guided by the new model, which will only strengthen research and doctoral studies in general. However, there are a number of risks between the new model and the existing regulation at this time related to the design and the idea of the programme. If, at present, the programme focuses on research development and the creation of original, interdisciplinary scientific research, then if the programme is adapted to the requirements currently in force the idea of the programme based on the new doctoral studies model will be lost.

As MoES has recognised in its letter No. 4-6e/22/1760 of 13 June 2022, by developing and also licencing the new study programme, RSU *pilots* within the research project implemented by the ministry which also places great responsibility on the implementation of the programme.

RSU tests in practice the practical functioning of the solutions contained in the concepts of these reform. Namely, in accordance with the approach based of the principle of good governance, the conclusions drawn, as well as the proposals drawn up should serve to remedy shortcomings within a specific area, and should also serve to improve regulation.

It should also be noted that the initial impact (*ex-ante*) assessment report (annotation) of the draft regulatory enactment “Amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions”, indicating

the problems of the level of doctoral programmes, the MoES has indicated that when accrediting the doctoral study programme within the scope of the study direction, the academic environment of the doctoral study programme is not adequately evaluated. The level of competence and skill of academic staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme, including doctoral thesis supervisors, varies from university to university. The governance and monitoring of doctoral study programmes depending on the approach of the institution of higher education takes place either at the level of the institution of higher education or its structural unit or within the framework of a separate doctoral study programme. Due to the decentralised approach, various differences in the governance, monitoring and, consequently, quality of doctoral study programmes are observed even within one institution of higher education. Doctoral studies do not contribute to the mastering of widely used skills, which affects the competitiveness of persons with doctoral degrees in the labour market. There is no unified understanding of a person with doctoral knowledge and skills in the country. Thus, accreditation of doctoral programmes outside study directions should be considered. The annotation of the Law also indicates that the draft amendments will contribute to the situation that Doctoral schools will provide doctoral students with study courses for mastering of widely used skills regardless of the study direction of the doctoral study programme, thus improving the competitiveness of persons with doctoral degrees in the labour market. Thus, work is already ongoing on the decentralisation of study directions at the level of doctoral programmes.⁶ The annotation reasonably points out that the current framework hinders cross-sectoral scientific research, does not promote excellence in research due to the specific review procedure, as well as hinders the creation and implementation of international joint doctoral study programmes, given that it is difficult to make it comparable to the process of awarding doctoral degrees in other countries.

However, given the existing technical requirements of regulatory enactments, only one study direction should be defined by RSU. Thus, the unifying, or base study direction is “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management”.

In its reply No. 4-6e/22/176 of 13 June 2022 to RSU, the MoES indicated that the institution of higher education should decide itself on the basis of which study direction this study programme can best fulfil the development potential and ensure development of interdisciplinary content. The direction chosen by RSU is generally a horizontal element in the hierarchical system of social sciences. Regardless of the field or sub-field of science in which research is carried out, an original study is developed taking into account the national, EU and international legal frameworks as a whole.

All the StP sub-programmes, their content fits the StP as an organic component thereof and correspond to the group of the social sciences sector.

After evaluating the resources and development potential necessary for implementation of the new interdisciplinary programme, RSU concluded that the study direction on which the DSP “Social Sciences” will be based and which best helps to fulfil the development potential of the StP and ensure development of interdisciplinary content is the study direction “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management”.

Correlation of the study direction “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management” with the new doctoral study programme “Social Sciences”

⁶ Draft ID 22-TA-1113 “Amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions”. Annotation. Ministry of Education and Science. Available at: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/ef7dda9f-6678-47b5-9a87-e4141f77890e (viewed on 04.01.2023)

A new interdisciplinary doctoral study programme “Social Sciences” was developed within the study direction “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management”. The development of the programme was also based on the implementation of the aim of the study direction, which focuses on training highly qualified specialists in the field of economics and business management for Latvia, the European Union and the entire world community and its management processes to ensure the intersectoral interaction prospect (namely, fundamental and practical research results of the field of science).

The new doctoral StP, taking into account its selected study direction, provides for the following tasks:

- 1) to provide doctoral students with the opportunity to master innovative interdisciplinary and dynamic approach in research, extending the competences necessary for scientific research, to carry out industry-relevant, original and innovative research, to increase scientific excellence at the level of scientific articles published in international journals;
- 2) to provide doctoral students with the opportunity to acquire competences in the intersectoral integration prospect that contribute to the dissemination of knowledge in society at national and international level, as well as promote strengthening of transversal skills;
- 3) to provide doctoral students with the opportunity to acquire competence to independently improve their scientific qualifications in order to carry out or manage research or development projects meeting international criteria at national and international level, including using new digital skills in fields of research relevant to the sector.

These tasks clearly reflect conformity to several study directions, including the direction “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management”.

Several highly qualified professionals, LCS experts in the relevant field of science were involved to ensure the quality of content of the doctoral study programme, as well as its conformity to the selected study direction.

Information on LCS experts involved in the implementation of DSP “Social Sciences”

With regard to the implementation of DSP “Social Science” in the study direction “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management”, it is important to draw attention both to the number of LCS experts and to the number of doctoral theses defended in the study direction. Consequently, we indicated that the number of LCS experts represented in the relevant direction is sufficient to ensure the implementation of defence of doctoral theses, as well as the implementation of the StP itself in accordance with the requirements of regulatory enactments.

Name/surname	Study course DSP “Social Sciences”	LCS status period
Andrejs Cekuls	Socio-economic processes development trends: business management and economics	03.11.2024
Anželika Berķe-Berga	Socio-economic processes development trends: business management and economics	03.09.2023
Dzintra Atstāja	Scientific writing and scientific communication	06.01.2024
Henrijs Kaļķis	Socio-economic processes development trends: business management and economics	29.07.2022

Inna Dowladbekova	Socio-economic processes development trends: business management and economics	02.12.2023
Jeļena Šalkovska	Socio-economic processes development trends: business management and economics	19.02.2023
Tatjana Muravska	Socio-economic processes development trends: business management and economics, Doctoral examination in sciences and in the selected field or sub-field of science; Independent scientific research work (participation in summer schools, scientific projects in the topic related to the doctoral thesis, participation in doctoral schools, foreign experience exchange programme, etc.), Dissemination of scientific results, Drafting of a doctoral thesis, Independent teaching work	07.10.2023

While noting the development of the study direction “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management” in the context of doctoral studies, [information](#) regarding defended doctoral theses should be mentioned, which also indicates trends in research development implemented in the study direction. Namely, in 2022 and 2023, two doctoral theses were defended in the study direction “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management”.

1. “Integrated Approach to Taxation Optimisation in Latvia”. Defended: 10.01.2023
2. “Development of the Electricity Demand Response Mechanism for Renewable Integration and Consumer Engagement in Latvia. Summary of the Doctoral Thesis”. Defended: 07.07.2022

It follows from this that the doctoral study programme “Social Sciences” corresponds to the study direction “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management”.

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

1.1. Indicators of the study programme

Table 1. StP parameters

1.	Title of the study programme	Academic doctoral study programme “Social Sciences”	
2.	Name of the study programme in English	Academic Doctoral Study Programme “Social sciences”	
3.	Code of the study programme in accordance with the Latvian Education Classification	EQF level 8, subprogrammes: 51380 – Law 51312 – Political Science 51314 – Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work 51321 – Communication Culture and Multimedia 51345 – Health Management 51345 – Business Management and Economics	
4.	Field of science of the study programme (applicable to the doctoral study programmes)	<i>Social Sciences</i>	
5.	Type of the study programme	<i>Academic doctoral study programme</i>	
6.	Level of qualification to be acquired (NQF/EQF)	8 EQF	
7.	Amount of the study programme (CP, preferably also ECTS)	176 CP (264 ECTS)	
8.	Form, type, and duration of the study programme (in case the duration cannot be measured in full years, specify the number of months), as well as the language in which the study programme is implemented		
	full-time, intramural form	<i>4 years</i>	<i>Latvian and English</i>
	Full-time, extramural form	-	-
	Part-time, intramural form	-	-
	Part-time, extramural form	-	-
	part-time, distance learning	<i>4 years and 6 months</i>	<i>Latvian and English</i>
9.	Place of implementation	<i>Rīga Stradiņš University, Dzirciema iela 16, Rīga, LV-1007</i>	
10.	Admission requirements	1. Law: academic or professional master’s degree in Law or equivalent higher education. Applicants with a	

		<p>Master's degree or an equivalent degree in another social sciences sector, other group of sectors should pass an entrance examination.</p> <p>2. Political Science: academic or professional Master's degree in political science or equivalent higher education. Applicants with a Master's degree or an equivalent degree in another social sciences sector, other group of sectors should pass an entrance examination.</p> <p>3. Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work: academic or professional Master's degree in social anthropology, sociology, social work or equivalent higher education. Applicants with a Master's degree or an equivalent degree in another social sciences sector, other group of sectors should pass an entrance examination.</p> <p>4. Communication Culture and Multimedia: academic or professional Master's degree in mass media and communication or equivalent higher education. Applicants with a Master's degree or an equivalent degree in another social sciences sector, other group of sectors should pass an entrance examination.</p> <p>5. Health Management: academic or professional Master's degree in health care, health management or an equivalent degree. Applicants with a Master's degree or an equivalent degree in another social sciences sector, other group of sectors should pass an entrance examination.</p> <p>6. Business Management and Economics: academic or professional Master's degree in social sciences, economics, business, management, occupational safety or an equivalent degree. Applicants with a Master's degree or an equivalent degree in another social sciences sector, other group of sectors should pass an entrance examination.</p>
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		<p>If a previous education has been acquired in a field of science other than that indicated above, the applicant should take an entrance examination – an interview. The entrance examination is organised in the form of an interview (the interview is recorded and the recording is stored for three months). The examination ascertains the knowledge of the applicant regarding the methodology of social sciences and research methods, as well as the current problems and research directions in the field of science of the relevant sub-programme.</p> <p>Studies in English in all sub-programmes require knowledge of English of at least B2.</p>
11.	The degree, professional qualification to be awarded or the degree and professional qualification, the so-called specialisation, to be awarded (if applicable)	Scientific doctoral degree doctor of science (Ph. D.) in social sciences
12.	Professional standard, its year of approval (if applicable)	-
13.	Final examination upon the completion of the study programme	<i>Doctoral thesis</i>
14.	Director of the study programme	<i>Karina Palkova Ph.D.</i>

1.2. Aim of the study programme

The aim of the doctoral study programme “Social Sciences” is to offer inclusive and sustainable educational opportunities thus contributing to the development of society, enabling talented and motivated students to carry out innovative research in cross-sectoral social sciences based on individual scientific work, to address issues requiring a multifaceted approach, expanding traditional boundaries of social science sectors, emphasising a dynamic approach in research in sectors of law, political science, business, health management, communication, sociology, social anthropology and social work.

The StP will enable students to create new knowledge, develop new research approaches and methods, develop capabilities and skills to use approaches and techniques from different disciplines, manage scientific projects. Students will practice scientific communication, formulation of expert opinion and communication with different audiences. The StP is built on contemporary challenges and academic environment development laws and offers complementarity and integration across different fields of science, developing a wide range of research programmes and projects unique to each sector or interdisciplinary research programmes and projects.

In the study process, the StP creates preconditions for the mastering of widely used scientific competences, promotes the ability to critically evaluate scientific opportunities and limitations, promotes the responsibility of the doctoral student for his or her activities and the selected field of science.

Aims and tasks of sub-programmes of the doctoral study programme “Social Sciences”

Sub-programme “Law”

Aim:

To prepare high-level legal specialists capable of analysing legal challenges in interdisciplinarily changing social settings and of providing a legal and innovative solution to these challenges, offering proportionate ideas for the development of the legal framework that are in line with public interests.

Tasks:

1. To deepen knowledge of the interdisciplinary nature of the legal framework, interpreting the legal framework from several aspects in the various sub-fields of law at the same time.
2. To develop the skills to propose a solution to one problem looking from a number of sub-fields of law, as well as the skills to develop innovative and scientifically justified research on the adequacy of the legal framework to the needs of society and to offer new concepts on ways of improving the legal framework.
3. To cultivate scientific discussions and presentation skills by participating in discussions with industry professionals and the public, presenting research on issues of public interest.

Sub-programme “Political Science”

Objective:

To prepare researchers, teaching staff for higher education institutions and analysts for political institutions, who are highly qualified in political theory and international politics and engaged in innovative projects.

Tasks:

1. To promote the possibility for doctoral students to acquire innovative research-based education in political science with an emphasis on interdisciplinarity.
2. To provide doctoral students with the opportunity to engage in international cooperation in political science networks to facilitate their way towards high-value international publications.
3. To develop the possibility to independently increase own scientific qualifications through national and international political science-based and interdisciplinary research projects.

Sub-programme “Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work”

Objective:

To prepare social anthropologists, social workers and sociologists who, after graduation, are able to engage in research and solving of practical problems at national and international level, working in academic work and research, as well as advising non-governmental and business organisations, while ensuring scientific excellence in the sub-field.

Tasks:

1. To provide doctoral students with the opportunity to master innovative interdisciplinary and dynamic approach in research in social anthropology, social work and

sociology, as well as to carry out industry-relevant, original and innovative research, which would make it possible to increase scientific excellence within the sub-programme.

2. To provide doctoral students with the opportunity to acquire competence and expertise to independently improve their scientific qualifications in order to carry out and manage research and development projects.

The learning outcomes of the sub-programmes are consistent with the learning outcomes of DSP “Social Sciences”, which are naturally applicable both to the social sciences group as a whole and more narrowly to the sub-programmes.

Sub-programme “Communication Culture and Multimedia”

Objective:

To make possible modern, comparative and innovative communication research, as well as develop students’ skills to critically evaluate meso- and macro-level communication processes and make recommendations to policy makers and enforcers.

Tasks:

1. To provide doctoral students with the opportunity to learn the diverse paradigms of the communication theory and enhance their competences in their application in the collection, processing, interpretation and presentation of empirical data.
2. To provide doctoral students with the ability to acquire competence to transfer theoretical knowledge to the practical organisation of communication processes at meso and macro level.
3. To promote the possibility for doctoral students to acquire competence to integrate local theoretical and practical research in the field of communication into the international context.

Sub-programme “Health Management”

Objective:

To enable motivated students to carry out innovative research in the field of health management science, to address conceptual issues of the health sector, to find solutions to the challenges of the modern health sector in the context of an interdisciplinary approach.

Tasks:

1. To provide doctoral students with the opportunity to master and develop evidence-based research knowledge in the field of health management, to acquire the competences necessary for scientific research, to carry out industry-relevant, original and data-based innovative research in health sectors to address management issues and to increase scientific excellence at the level of scientific articles published in international journals;
2. To provide doctoral students with the opportunity to acquire competence in scientific substantiation of health management issues, the creation and dissemination of knowledge in society at national and international level;
3. To provide doctoral students with the opportunity to acquire competence to independently improve their scientific qualifications in order to carry out or manage research or development projects meeting international criteria at national and international level, including using new digital skills in fields of research relevant to the health sector.

Sub-programme “Business Management and Economics”

Aim:

To prepare academically educated and competitive experts and researchers in business management and economics with knowledge, skills and competences corresponding to the level in the Latvian national Qualifications Framework, which results in an internationally recognised

Ph. D. To promote an improvement in scientific excellence and research at national and international scale.

Tasks:

1. To promote an improvement in scientific excellence and research in the field of the sub-programme.
2. To providing doctoral students with the possibility to develop internationally comparable competence in economics and business management.
3. To ensure the full learning cycle in business *management* – Bachelor – Master – doctoral studies – at RSU.
4. To provide the doctoral study sub-programme as open to interdisciplinary research focusing on internationalisation of business management and economics.

1.3. Objectives of the study programme

1) to provide doctoral students with the opportunity to master innovative interdisciplinary and dynamic approach in research, extending the competences necessary for scientific research, to carry out industry-relevant, original and innovative research, to increase scientific excellence at the level of scientific articles published in international journals;

2) to provide doctoral students with the opportunity to acquire competences in the intersectoral integration prospect that contribute to the dissemination of knowledge in society at national and international level, as well as promote strengthening of transversal skills;

3) to provide doctoral students with the opportunity to acquire competence to independently improve their scientific qualifications in order to carry out or manage research or development projects meeting international criteria at national and international level, including using new digital skills in fields of research relevant to the sector.

1.4. Learning outcomes to be achieved

Table 2. Planned learning outcomes of doctoral study programme “Social Sciences”

Outcome of the study programme	Level in the European Qualifications Framework
<p>1. At the level of doctor of science, knows, understands, constructively and critically evaluates and applies the latest scientific theories and considerations, manages research methodology and modern research methods not only in the selected field of science but also at interdisciplinary level, thus creating a multifaceted approach to exploring the thematic area of several disciplines for conducting creative research</p>	<p>8-Z-001 – able to show that he/she has good knowledge of and understands the most up-to-date scientific theories and insights, manages research methodology and modern research methods in the respective field of science or professional area and in between different fields</p>
<p>2. By critically analysing, differentiating, classifying, synthesising, comparing, is able to innovatively resolve research tasks at interdisciplinary level, independently identify, formulate and explain a scientifically unique research idea, plan, develop and implement national and supranational scientific projects</p>	<p>8-K-001 – able to carry out independent, critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation in order to solve important research or innovation tasks, to independently put forward the idea of research, to plan, structure and manage large-scale scientific, including international, projects</p>

<p>3. Independently develops a new, creative understanding of existing knowledge, creates and justifies new approaches, develops original research – a doctoral thesis – contributing to the expansion of knowledge boundaries in the interdisciplinary perspective, and takes care of the practical application of this knowledge</p>	<p>8-P-001 – able to independently evaluate and select appropriate methods for scientific research, has contributed to extension of boundaries of knowledge or given new insights to existing knowledge and application thereof in practice, while implementing original research of considerable size, part of which is at the level of internationally citable publications</p>
<p>4. Presents the results of scientific research at national and international level, prepares internationally citable scientific publications, participates in conferences, develops scientific and digital skills in academic activities and scientific communication, ensures informing of the public and raising awareness of research and its results</p>	<p>8-P-001 – able to communicate both verbally and in writing about one’s scientific field of activity (one’s branch) with the wider scientific community and society as a whole</p>
<p>5. Understands and critically evaluates the potential and limitations of science, as well as personal responsibility for own activities and the field of science at interdisciplinary level</p>	<p>8-K-001 – able to carry out independent, critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation in order to solve important research or innovation tasks, to independently put forward the idea of research, to plan, structure and manage large-scale scientific, including international, projects</p>
<p>6. Able to increase one’s scientific qualification independently, gain achievements that correspond to the international criteria of the particular field of science, participate in or manage research tasks in different organisations that require the knowledge and skills of a researcher</p>	<p>8-P-001 – able to increase one’s scientific qualification independently, to carry out scientific projects, gaining achievements that correspond to international criteria of the particular field of science, to manage research or development tasks in companies, institutions and organisations requiring extensive research knowledge and skills</p>
<p>7. Knows and is able to offer new digital skills by connecting them into pedagogical and research digital competence, choosing technologies and technological solutions to achieve pedagogical and research objectives</p>	<p>8-P-001 – able to independently evaluate and select appropriate methods for scientific research, has contributed to extension of boundaries of knowledge or given new insights to existing knowledge and application thereof in practice, while implementing original research of considerable size, part of which is at the level of internationally citable publications</p>

During the development of the learning outcomes, the learning outcomes were mapped according to the descriptions of knowledge, skills and competences of level 8 in the Latvian Qualifications Framework (which corresponds to the level descriptions of the European Qualifications Framework) (see Annex 18.1 “Mapping of the Study Courses for the Achievement

of the Learning Outcomes of the Study Programme in DSP “Social Sciences”). Each of the study courses intends to achieve 2–6 defined learning outcomes of the study programme.

DSP “Social Sciences” offers sub-programmes, which are primarily focused on the areas to be strategically supported by RSU. Six study sub-programmes are created within the programme, which are part of DSP “Social Sciences” and mainly correspond to the group of social sciences.

2. Topicality of the study programme

2.1. Brief description of the study programme, including in specifying: Rationale for creating the study programme, compliance with trends in the sector in Latvia, European Union and the world.

When implementing the Plan for Development and Consolidation of Study Programmes of RSU adopted in 2018 and developed within the project “Reduction of fragmentation of study programmes and promotion of internationalisation of studies at Rīga Stradiņš University⁷, DSP “Social Sciences” was created in 2022 combining five doctoral programmes that have been effectively operating so far. The doctoral StP “Social Sciences” has been created in cooperation with industry experts, involving academic staff, general staff, student representatives and foreign experts.

RSU has effectively developed critical mass of research and diversity of research in recent years – it achieved a very good scientific assessment in the international evaluation of the activities of scientific institutions laid down in the Law on Scientific Activity in 2019 and was recognised as a strong scientific institution at international level (three of five points). The potential for the development of a social sciences platform was particularly appreciated by international experts and was used when developing DSP “Social Sciences”.⁸

Rīga Stradiņš University Development Strategy 2017-2021 (at the time of preparing the description of StP the new strategy was still being developed) provided for the internationalisation of the university and promotion of reputation in the international space as one of the horizontal strategic development goals.⁹ At the same time, it should be noted that the new strategy is based on digitalisation and digital transformation as one of the pillars, which will also be reflected in the new doctoral study programme.

The Development Strategy of Rīga Stradiņš University Scientific Institution, which provides for developing scientific activities and research in a number of directions, is important. One of them is the increase in the number of doctoral students and therefore young researchers, as well as the increase in the number and quality of scientific publications, scientific conferences and scientific projects. This will enable the university to move up in international university rankings and will also broadly strengthen RSU as a science university. The new DSP “Social Sciences” plays a crucial role in the context of these and other science promotion directions – doctoral graduates will be the future foundation for academic staff of the university. The foundation put in over the next few years will shape the direction in which the university will move in research and pedagogy in the decades to come.

⁷ The project “Reduction of fragmentation of study programmes and promotion of internationalisation of studies at Rīga Stradiņš University” (project No. 8.2.1.0/18/A/014, operational Programme “Growth and Employment”, specific objective “To reduce fragmentation of study programs and strengthen resource sharing” second project applications selection round (hereinafter referred to as SO 8.2.1)).

⁸ *International Evaluation of Scientific Institutions Activity. Panel Report: Social Science* (2021). Obtained from: <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/media/10717/download> [viewed on 01.02.2022].

⁹ *Rīga Stradiņš University Development Strategy 2022-2027. Consolidated version* (2022). https://www.rsu.lv/sites/default/files/docs/rsu_strategija_2027_kopsavilkums.pdf [viewed on 06.04.2022].

The development of the direction of international and cross-sectoral research, which underpins the development of the new social sciences study programme, is essential. Establishing cooperation agreements with foreign universities, attracting foreign lecturers and researchers permanently or for individual elements of the study and research process is a task that is successfully addressed in the programme.

The medium-term objective of the RSU strategy is to offer and implement extensive academic and professional university education, as well as research opportunities in several directions, including social sciences. RSU has three research platforms: Social Sciences, Medicine, Public Health.

Platform “Social Sciences”

By developing this platform, the necessary material base within the block of social sciences, without distinguishing sub-sectors, has been strengthened for several years, but by taking into account higher education trends in the development of the new doctoral studies model and research, with an emphasis on the cross-sectoral material research base.

The vision of the Social Sciences platform is to become the leading educational and research centre in Northern Europe, by exploring international relations, strategic communication, digital economy and artificial intelligence, as well as start-up entrepreneurship in the Eurasian region. Accordingly, the main research directions of the Social Sciences Platform:

- international relations and politics,
- international business and economic development,
- international and national legal systems and legislation,
- strategic communication and social anthropology.³

Those objectives are reflected accordingly in the new DSP, which is directly subordinate to the achievement of objectives of the Social Sciences Platform, namely to concentrate the resources of RSU on excellent research and to provide internationally recognised scientific expertise and recommendations at national and international level in the field of social sciences. One of the strategic directions of RSU is the development of social sciences in an interdisciplinary perspective. The DSP focuses on cross-sectoral research, focusing not on a strong definition of sub-sectors but on close interactions between sectors and sub-sectors directly within the group of sectors. In particular, the programme focuses on the group of fields of sciences “Social Sciences” by strengthening research results through sub-fields.⁴

Against this background, the doctoral study programme is developed focusing on interdisciplinarity and within the group of sectors “Social Sciences”, it is in line with the development strategy of the institution of higher education and the resources available to the RSU Social Sciences Platform.

In addition, science platforms such as Medicine and Public Health provide an advantage in developing, for example, the cross-sectoral sub-programme “Health Management”.

Platform “Public Health”

The Public Health Platform combines RSU resources for qualitative research at interdisciplinary level to foster health promotion, health care organisation and improvement of the working environment in Latvia.

Vision: to be the leading educational, public and environmental health research centre in the Baltic region, working closely with other research institutions and clinics at national and transnational level.

Main directions of research:

- disease prevention and health promotion,

- health systems,
- environmental health and occupational health.

Objective: to provide the necessary expertise, scientific and technical support at national and international level.

Platform “Medicine”

At interdisciplinary level the Medicine Platform concentrates RSU resources on conducting world-class research and developing methods for diagnosing and treating the most common diseases in the EU. Vision: to be the Baltic region’s leading medical education and research centre ensuring internationally recognised research.

Main directions of research:

- general medicine,
- dentistry (including oral and maxillofacial surgery),
- pharmacy.

Objective: to provide the necessary expertise, scientific and technical support at national and international level.

It follows from this that the development of scientific platforms ensures compliance of the programme “Social Sciences” with the development strategy and available resources of the institution of higher education, as well as compliance of sub-programmes: “Law”, “Political Science”, “Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work”, “Communication Culture and Multimedia”, “Health Management”, and “Business Management and Economics” with the RSU strategy for 2022-2027.

It is formed also by RSU scientific institutes. This is a prerequisite for ensuring high-quality doctoral studies, developing a sustainable research strategy and effective engagement in larger research or collaborative networks and regional clusters. RSU graduates receive high-value and competitive education in health care and social unit master education programmes, developing the necessary competence to conduct scientific activity that serves as the basis for further doctoral studies.

At the same time, it should be noted that in order to promote international cooperation in research and ensure coordinated exchange of scientific data at European level, in November 2022, RSU joined the European Open Science Cloud Association. Membership in the association allows the combination of e-infrastructures, digital service providers, various projects and scientific institutions to implement a common European research data infrastructure. This provides great support in the context of interdisciplinary research in DSP. Consequently, membership in the association provides additional opportunities for RSU doctoral students to use its infrastructure, which includes many services, including access to research data repositories, software solutions and training activities. It will enable large-scale studies, simulations and other activities, based on common standards, using available data and software resources.

Justification of the need for an interdisciplinary approach

In social sciences, individual fields of sciences and an interdisciplinary approach have both advantages and disadvantages. The conditionally isolated development and coexistence of fields of science represent the stability and homogeneity of knowledge-building, while interdisciplinarity represents the diversity of knowledge and the ability to adapt to social reality and to explain it in a much broader and more comprehensive way.

Traditionally, fields of science have been seen as unique and relatively closed sources of knowledge and scientific thought. Each field of social sciences separately forms the basis for the common block of social sciences. Each of the sectors has both its own rational and random natural

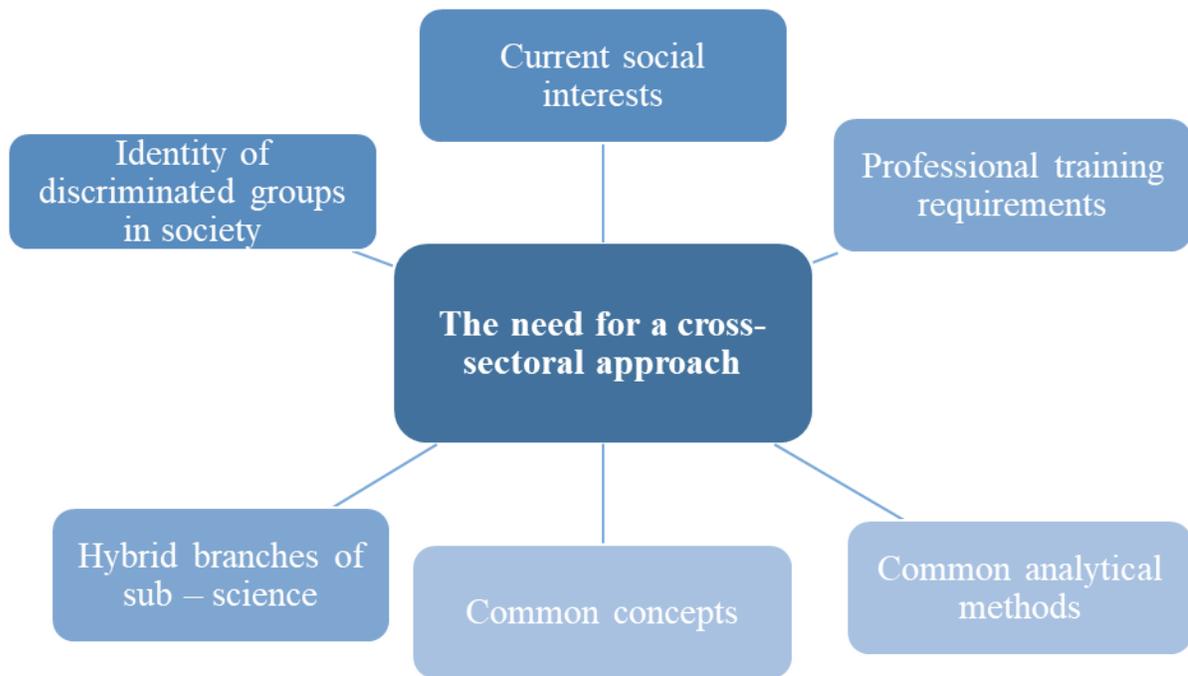
factors, which determine the range of topics and challenges the science industry deals with, as well as its inherent concepts, theories, methods and methodology, research models, principles of analysis, methods of explanation and other standards. The various fields of social sciences individually make it possible to acquire specific, in-depth knowledge of aspects and matters in their focus. At the same time, however, there is also a risk of fragmentation of knowledge, the risk of ignoring new and complex relationships and the risk of studying new objects and only partial studying of topics, which may not meet existing practical and conceptual needs, both in science and in economic sectors and in the global environment as a whole. As isolated sectors become guardians of boundaries of their own knowledge, methodologies and theories, the ability to generate new knowledge and to adequately interpret social developments is often lost; social sciences often become less effective precisely because of the fragmentation of disciplines.

A cross-sectoral or cross-disciplinary approach provides a solution to this problem, which can be seen in a simplified way as an effective means of solving problems and answering questions that cannot be fully addressed through methods, approaches and knowledge of separate sectors. The context of the challenges can be very broad and varied, and its gradation can range from addressing short-term instrumentality or topical practical issues, to reconceptualizing large-scale epistemological approaches in social sciences. The ability to learn using multiple sources of knowledge at the same time is crucial to broadening knowledge and building it in line with social reality and the interconnectedness of global processes. The risks of an interdisciplinary approach are traditionally associated with a lack of in-depth knowledge in the standards of individual scientific sectors and the inherent scientific challenges. A cross-sectoral approach is therefore best suited to the level of doctoral studies, where students at previous levels of higher education have acquired in-depth knowledge in at least one field of science, which can be extended at doctoral level to include the perspective, scientific methods, approaches, theories and models of other fields of science.

The development of an interdisciplinary approach creates a new opportunity to seek and promote solutions in different complex areas existing in society, including public health, the problem of poverty, violence and conflict in an individual, societal and global context, the challenges of global warming, etc. In social sciences, an interdisciplinary approach involves the application of broadened and deepened methodological and theoretical knowledge from the perspective of more than one traditional field of science to understand a particular social phenomenon.

The need for a cross-sectoral or cross-disciplinary approach to social sciences is thus determined by a number of interrelated factors: current social interests, requirements in the field of professional preparedness, common analytical methods and concepts, already existing sub-fields of hybrid sciences and the need for new ones, as well as issues of identify of discriminated groups in society as a factor having significant impact in social sciences (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Factors defining the need for a cross-sectoral approach in social sciences



Current social interests are most often highly interdisciplinary, attract interest of representatives from different fields of science, and their solutions and full interpretation are not possible within a single field of science. The green economy, the various aspects of labour market development, conflict research in the international environment, the role of the rule of law and democratic values in the functioning of society are some of the issues that are currently topical, but their range is much wider.

Professional preparedness requirements in various sectors of the economy require comprehensively educated specialists who are able to view existing social realities and related problems in a broad perspective that is not limited to a narrow focus of a discipline. Business management, diplomacy, public administration and health care are just a few areas of employment that are waiting for experts' ability to combine theoretical knowledge with practical solutions and at the same time take into account different perspectives and different groups of society, their concerns, needs and interests.

The need for a cross-sectoral or cross-disciplinary approach is also determined by common concepts, common analytical methods and their applicability in the context of different fields of science. This aspect is particularly relevant for quantitative methods which enable interdisciplinary objectives in science and research to be achieved using similar methods. Such methods cover, but are not limited to, computer modelling, different statistical methods and game theories.

There are already hybrid sub-fields in social sciences that combine the individual elements of different and yet related fields. This creates new cross-sectors that have the potential to fill the knowledge gaps that are emerging between isolated fields. Those are, for example, political economics, historical sociology and social psychology.

The factor of identity of discriminated groups of society in promoting a cross-sectoral approach has been particularly important in social sciences since the end of World War 2 and does not lose its relevance today either. The collective social experience of groups of society, who are discriminated or even oppressed, forms the identity of groups. This social reality requires both practical policy solutions and the contribution of social sciences, and explanations, interpretations

and possible solutions to this complex problem have always been highly interdisciplinary in the social sciences perspective and cover both aspects of the rule of law, equality and justice and issues of public administration, economic development and international governance. The most striking examples in this category are well-developed research on women's rights and women's equality, ethnic studies, postcolonial studies and social change activism research.

The cross-sectoral approach as a whole has the potential to cross the boundaries of knowledge and opportunities of specific fields by integrating expertise, concepts and methods and pooling knowledge. This creates new knowledge and new approaches that are much better able to shape, scientifically explain and interpret social reality that, in its complexity and diversity, does not fall within narrow disciplines.

The formation of the content of the new joint DSP "Social Sciences" was largely based on the principles of the Salzburg Seminar of the third cycle of the Bologna Process, that the development of research excellence and careers of Doctoral Degree candidates should take into account their individual objectives, motivation and identification of career opportunities. This postulate justified the creation of study content.

2.2. Outline of the content of the study programme.

StP was structured according to both the latest trends in the development of the doctoral studies model, as well as taking into account changes in the Law on Scientific Activity, which provides for the provision of scientific activities in the particular group of fields of sciences of Latvia, as well as supporting cross-sectoral research. They also provided for a more flexible approach to research in social sciences and beyond.

Therefore, the study programme has been developed for 4 years (full-time intramural, which will be implemented both in Latvian and English) or 4.5 years (part-time distance learning, which will be implemented both in English and Latvian). Of the total 176 CP/264 ECTS during studies, research accounts for 91% (160 CP), while the study course mastering – 9% (16 CP).

Doctoral studies at RSU are organised in accordance with the Doctoral Studies Regulations (available in [Latvian](#), [English](#)), which stipulate that doctoral studies an independent work of a doctoral student led by a scientific paper supervisor and academic staff for obtaining a scientific doctoral degree.

The learning outcomes are planned to be achieved by creating an intellectually stimulating research environment, organising study courses and other events (conferences, discussions) with the participation of lecturers from RSU and other institutions of higher education, providing doctoral students with access to the necessary literature and methodological materials. The learning outcomes will also be achieved by offering students the opportunity to engage in research programmes, promoting cooperation between doctoral students to exchange knowledge and experience and creating the possibility to teach courses in Bachelor's and Master's level programmes. The opportunity to acquire international experience by participating in conferences, publishing articles in academic journals, as well as by attracting foreign visiting lecturers will be provided. For the implementation of mobility and internationalisation, it is planned to attract visiting lecturers to teach and co-teach at lectures, classes, discussions, seminars. It will be possible to obtain credit points for optional study courses for participation in local and international research projects, thus gaining experience and developing cooperation networks for successful future careers in science, or taking study courses necessary for the doctoral thesis at other world universities, implementing the smart open education policy.

In accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, three parts are distinguished in the study programme for the preparation of doctoral students at RSU: compulsory study part

(courses of part A), restricted elective study part (courses of part B) and free elective study part (courses of part C). The main aim of the study programme is an original cross-sectoral research and successful drafting and defence of doctoral theses. Therefore, the greatest emphasis in the planning of studies is on acquiring and strengthening skills, competences and knowledge for the development of a doctoral thesis in a cross-sectoral perspective, as well as the orientation of all study courses, including doctoral seminars, towards drafting of a doctoral thesis. This is partly due to the need to avoid previous practices, when too much of doctoral student's time was filled by study courses and teaching work. As a result, the progress of doctoral students towards the completion of their doctoral thesis suffered.

22 credit points are intended to be received in each of the full-time intramural eight semesters: Semesters 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 contain only courses of part A; semester 3 – courses of part A with 18 credit points, courses of part B with 2-4 credit points and courses of part C with 0-2 credit points; semester 4 – courses of part A with 18 credit points, courses of part B with 4 credit points.

The first semester will include study courses that are joint for all the sub-programmes of the study programme: “Science Philosophy, Research Principles, Methods, Methodology and Praxis of Social Science in Interdisciplinary Perspective” (DN_198) and a study course “Learning and Teaching in the Higher Education and Science” (DN_205) intended for additional improvement and development of teaching skills of doctoral students. As well as work within each sub-programme at the doctoral seminar “Development of Doctoral Thesis” (Part 1) (DN_196); such a seminar will be held every semester in accordance with the specifics of each sub-programme to discuss and analyse each doctoral thesis and its progress. Doctoral students will also have to conduct independent scientific research work or scientific research and present its conclusions at conferences – progress will be assessed within the module “Research Practice” (DN_194) (Part 1).

During the second semester work at the doctoral seminar “Development of Doctoral Thesis” (DN_196) (Part 2) will continue within each sub-programme to discuss and analyse each doctoral thesis and its progress. Doctoral students will also have to create and disseminate scientific results, and progress will be assessed within the module “Research Practice” (DN_194) (Part 2) at the end of the year of studies, and there will be a possibility to master the course Scientific Writing and Scientific Communication (DN_205).

The third semester will continue with the development of a doctoral thesis (“Development of Doctoral Thesis” (DN_196) (Part 3) and creation and dissemination of scientific results (“Dissemination of Scientific Results” (DN_194) (Part 3)). In addition, there is examination of the process of independent teaching work of doctoral students (“Independent Teaching Work” (DN_192)), where doctoral students will have to do teaching work, read or co-read lectures and classes, review written works and scientifically supervise student papers. The doctoral students, who did not learn civil defence and environmental protection during their previous studies, will listen to the course “Civil Defence and Environmental Protection” (KPUMTK_016). Doctoral students will also have the opportunity to participate in the study courses “Conceptual Approaches to the Organisation of Innovative Health Care” (VVDG_032), “Mathematical Statistical Methods in Social Sciences” (DN_199), “English in Social Sciences: Preparing a Scientific Manuscript” (DN_204) or a free elective course, which may be related to the specific block of the doctoral student's sub-programme, and also master other knowledge the doctoral student requires to develop a doctoral thesis.

The third semester also contains a doctoral examination in a foreign language (DN_197), which will examine skills of doctoral students in understanding, as well as speaking and writing in English on the topic of their doctoral thesis and methodological, methodical, theoretical and meta-theoretical matters in a broader scientific context.

In the fourth semester, alongside the development of a doctoral thesis (“Development of Doctoral Thesis” (Part 4) (DN_196)) and independent teaching work (“Independent Teaching Work” (DN_192)), emphasis is intended to be placed on individual research work (“Research Practice” (DN_194)), which would take the form of participation in summer schools, participation in scientific projects, participation in doctoral schools, participation in foreign experience exchange programmes, etc. Depending on the specialisation of doctoral students (sub-programmes), they will master one of the following study courses: “Approaches to and Topical Issues of Analysis of International Relations and Political Science” (DN_200), “Topical Issues of Communication Theory and Research Methodology” (DN_201), “Topical Issues of Social Anthropology, Sociology or Social Work” (KF_034), “Socio-Economic Process Development Trends in Business Management and Economics” (DN_195), “Law in the Focus of Social Processes — Modern Problems of Interpretability of the Legal System” (DN_193) or “Current Issues of Health Management Theory, Practice and Research” (VVVDG_034). They will address the current theoretical and empirical issues of the relevant scientific sub-field.

At the end of the fourth semester individual research progress in the science of the doctoral examination and in the selected field and sub-field of science will be identified in a form in which methodological, methodical, theoretical, meta-theoretical and empirical knowledge acquired during the course of doctoral studies will be examined (“Doctoral Examination in the Science and Selected Field and Sub-Field of Science” (DN_203)).

In the fifth semester, it is planned to focus even more on the process of developing the doctoral thesis and creating and disseminating scientific results. Thus, the third year of studies consists of two structural parts: “Development of Doctoral Thesis” (DN_196) (Part 5) and “Research Practice” (DN_194) (Part 5).

The sixth semester is devoted only to the development of a doctoral thesis “Development of Doctoral Thesis” (DN_196) (Part 6).

The seventh and eighth semester are devoted to the development of a doctoral thesis (“Development of Doctoral Thesis”, Part 7 and 8) (DN_196).

Overall, the breakdown of StP credit points and contact hours corresponds to the following percentages: research – 91%, mastering of study courses – 9%.

Each of the study courses intends to achieve 2-5 defined StP results to meet the StP aim. Each StP objective is linked to study courses and their learning outcomes (six in total: one in the knowledge category, two in the competence category and three in the skills category). The emphasis is on competences and skills.

Doctoral seminars should be particularly highlighted. To prepare for them, students spend a lot of time by independently reading, searching for and collecting information, preparing presentations to participate in discussions, exchanges of views and mutual evaluation in a focused way either face-to-face or online, thus developing cooperation, communication, feedback, reflexion and other transversal skills for which communication and socialisation are important. Other Latvian and foreign scientists and opinion leaders will also be involved in the work at doctoral seminars, as well as foreign experts will be attracted.

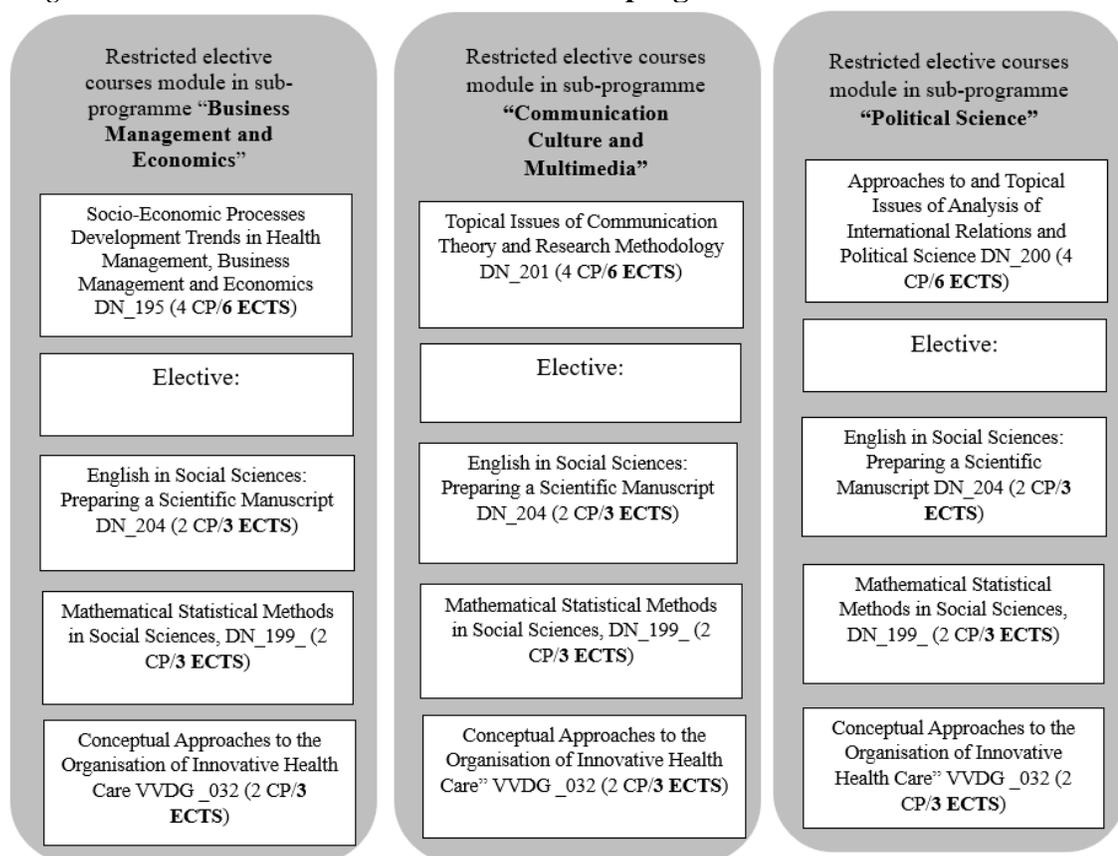
The doctoral student obtains the highest number of credit points (144 CP / 216 ECTS) for the development of his/her doctoral thesis. The content of this course consists of the original scientific research carried out independently by the doctoral student, in cooperation with and under the supervision of the doctoral thesis supervisor. The development of the doctoral thesis is implemented in accordance with the plan of the doctoral study programme developed by the doctoral student together with the supervisor of the doctoral thesis for each year of studies. The doctoral student may do pedagogical work in their workplace or at the RSU department, in which their supervisor of the doctoral thesis works. The involvement of RSU doctoral students in

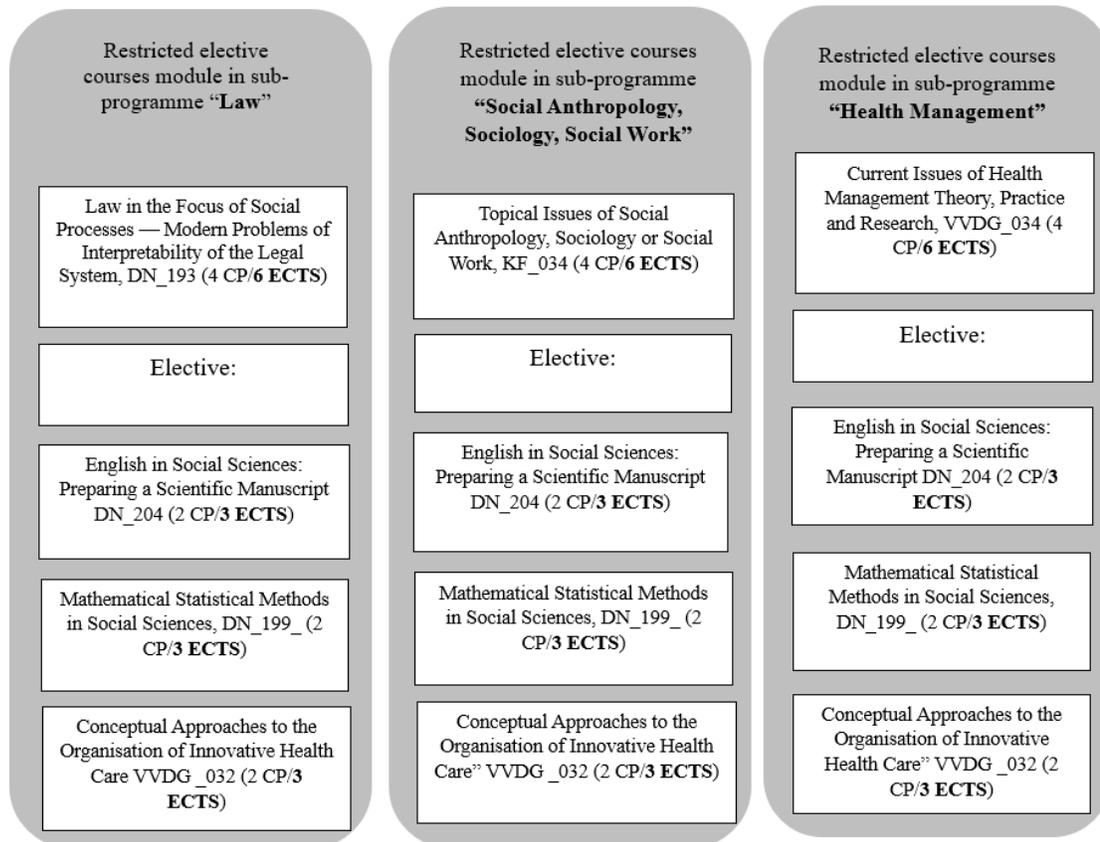
pedagogical work will also contribute to teaching staff regeneration. Entries in the Doctoral Student's Book are made for this work, and credit points are awarded on basis of them. It should be noted that a great emphasis in the implementation of the programme will be placed on the performance of a qualitative learning outcome, the development of a doctoral thesis and the least possible workload of the doctoral student in doing teaching work.

According to the selected sector, students pass a doctoral examination in their field-sub-field of social sciences (Economics and Business, Mass Media and Communication, Political Science, Law, Sociology, Social Anthropology, Social Work, Health and Sports Sciences). A valid internationally recognised language proficiency certificate, for example, a *TOEIC*, *TOEFL* or *IELTS* certificate in English, DAF test in German corresponding to C1 level of language proficiency (Common European Framework of Reference for Language learning and teaching), DALF test in French according to language proficiency level C1 (Common European Framework of Reference for Language learning and teaching) are considered equivalent to the doctoral examination in a foreign language.

Restricted elective study courses (Part B) are even more focused on the specifics of individual research work. They can be divided into two parts. The first part contains courses that strengthen excellence in research quality, while the second part contains field-specific courses that promote an in-depth ability of representatives of the fields of Economics and Business, Mass Media and Communication, Political Science, Law Science, Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work, and Health and Sports Sciences to address issues and contemporary challenges in the field/sub-field chosen by doctoral students.

Figure 2. Module of courses of Part B in sub-programmes





The schematic picture shows the content of each sub-programme as well as common and different study courses. Each sub-programme includes a study course corresponding to it, which ensures the provision of expertise in conformity with the division into sectors.

Free elective study courses (Part C) include very narrow specialisation courses in the relevant sub-field of science, a vertically integrated project, and study courses in another accredited Latvian institution of higher education, which has received a doctoral study programme licence. These courses also include courses of visiting lectures for the implementation of mobility and internationalisation. Part C courses also cover specialisation courses focused on the mastering of interdisciplinary courses in the health sector (e.g. Health Economy Tools to Improve the Efficiency of Healthcare Services; Human Rights and Labour Rights; Communication Psychology; Human Functioning, Disability and Health; Vertical Integration Project; Visiting lecturer's course or course at a Doctoral School, etc.).

The objective of the elective courses is to create opportunities for each doctoral student to acquire specific knowledge, skills and competences to promote the development of his/her doctoral thesis, acquire or develop transversal skills, as well as develop critical thinking abilities for conducting specific (field/sub-field) research, while working independently and in cooperation with his or her thesis supervisor. In the part of elective studies, a doctoral student should collect 8 CP/12 ECTS, of which no more than 2 CP/3 ECTS constitute free elective study courses.

At the same time, it should be noted that to ensure research freedom and mastering of courses relevant to the doctoral thesis, the principle of individual planning is maintained, the content of the programme is selected according to the topic of the doctoral thesis, namely specifically. The research excellence, taking into account Salzburg principles and recommendations, envisages the individual path of a doctoral student in an open scientific activity environment and mobility, so

DSP “Social Sciences” offers a flexible individual study plan drawn up by the student together with his/her doctoral thesis supervisor and the RSU Department of Doctoral Studies.

DSP already provided doctoral students with the possibility to be involved in the development of research directions of RSU, both by developing an appropriate doctoral thesis and preparing scientific publications. Doctoral students were involved both in the implementation of LCS FLPP projects as researchers, as well as in the research project competition for the joint cooperation programme the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine in the field of science and technology in 2020-2021, etc.

During studies, each doctoral student does his/her doctoral thesis research the fields or sub-fields mentioned in Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 595 (27.09.2022) “Regulations on Latvian groups of fields of sciences, fields and sub-fields of science”¹⁰ and during studies prepares publications on the topic of the doctoral thesis, which should be indexed in an international database (ERIH+, *Scopus* or *Web of Science* (the requirement is defined in the Doctoral Studies Academic Regulations)).

During studies, a doctoral student engages in the study process by performing pedagogical work in one of the RSU faculties, departments or outside RSU in one of Latvian higher education institutions or foreign education institutions, for example, reading lectures, supervising Bachelor theses, etc.

Doctoral students have the opportunity to apply for a doctoral study grant (information in Latvian and English) and receive support for their scientific activity, research and publication of articles. DSP doctoral students actively apply for grants. Doctoral students can participate in mobility programmes, thus obtaining information for their research paper.

It should also be noted that in order to certify its ambitions and attempts to ensure high-quality and effective study process that is based on the understanding of modern education and ensures the development of modern competences, in 2016, RSU got proactively involved in measures for quality assessment of international studies, including project *Peer Assessment of Student Centered Learning (PASCL)* coordinated by the European Student Union, obtaining a certification of the implementation of the study process according to student-centred education approach principles. At the same time, in ensuring the quality of education and research, attention within the programme is paid to student-centred education by implementing study courses based on certain principles. Applying these principles to DSP “Social Sciences”, they are defined as tasks carried out in different forms, such as creating a common understanding among students and lecturers of what is expected of a student at the end of a study course or programme. In order to fulfil this task, regular individual discussions with the lecturers of the study courses are planned, before they start implementing the study course, including acquaintance with the topics submitted by doctoral students. **Twice a year there is a meeting of all lecturers and doctoral students, which provides significant feedback on the directions of study content and quality improvement.**

The involvement of students in providing feedback will be ensured at the level of study courses. Namely, the primary feedback reception mechanisms are oral surveys, as well as written surveys at the end of the semester (**filled out study course evaluation questionnaires**).

To help students plan the achievement of their learning outcomes and career more effectively, special attention will be paid to cooperation between the head of the study programme, the doctoral

¹⁰ Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 595 (27.09.2022) “Regulations on Latvian groups of fields of sciences, fields and sub-fields of science”, available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/335928-noteikumi-par-latvijas-zinatnes-nozaru-grupam-zinatnes-nozarem-un-apaknozarem>

thesis supervisor and the doctoral student to provide the necessary support in making choices that are strategically important for the doctoral thesis.

The implementation of the doctoral study programme is based on the management of this programme and the related set of organisational measures of the study programmes. During their studies, doctoral students will have the opportunity to ask questions of interest, discuss with lecturers and other doctoral students face-to-face and remotely (during lectures, seminars, tutorials) using various technical and technological possibilities (telephone, electronic communications, digital tools and platforms, various applications, etc.). Thus, by studying independently, the doctoral student will develop knowledge in interaction with peers, lecturers, visiting lecturers, conference audience, reviewers of scientific articles. In the study programme, attention will be paid to the opportunity for each student as an individual to unleash their creative and innovative potential, which will be added value for the future researcher and professional of the field.

The study programme is focused on the final result, original scientific delivery, the doctoral thesis and naturally the greatest possible involvement of doctoral students in the study process offering activities that promote individual and group performance of doctoral students (for example, participating in the organisation of conferences, scientific thinktanks, discussions), presentations and discussions on current research and theory issues of the topic of one's doctoral thesis (for example, studying in doctoral seminars), participation in conferences and preparation of scientific publications, as well as dissemination of knowledge.

The perspective development of the study programme will be in accordance with the tasks of Latvia in the implementation of common strategies of the European Union. It will provide education that is in line with the achievements of the field and promotes the education of junior researchers.

One of the challenges of Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (available in [Latvian](#), [English](#)) is the rapid change of the global economy and technologies. The study programme will purposefully create close synergy between research and studies, allowing to involve students not only in research, but also in work of a scientific organisation, thus developing the ability to conduct powerful interdisciplinary research in the development of fields of social sciences.

During their studies, doctoral students will develop the ability to communicate both orally and in writing on the topic of their research with the wider scientific community and society in general. The ability to independently improve one's scientific qualification, implement scientific projects, gaining achievements in accordance with international criteria in the field is also being developed. Doctoral students will reach a level of competence in which they are able to independently solve important research or innovation tasks, formulate current research ideas, plan, structure scientific projects, including in an international context, for example, by participating in research projects.

2.3. List and justification of the changes made in the study programme since licencing of the study programme.

Taking into account the comments made at the licensing meeting and taking into account the work on improving the programme, the following clarifications were made:

1. According to the recommendations of QAHE experts, the representation of the private sector in the implementation of the programme has been strengthened, namely, the composition of the StP Study Quality Council has been clarified. The document was supplemented with a relevant paragraph as follows:

“Members of the Study Quality Council, representatives of employers:

1. Representatives of state administrative institutions:
 - 1.1. Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia
 - 1.2. Representative of the Health Inspectorate
 - 1.3. Representative of the European Association of Health Law
 - 1.4. Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia
2. Representatives of the private sector”
2. The planning of DSP “Social Sciences” has been clarified. In accordance with the recommendations of QAHE experts, Part A study course “Information Literacy in Science (Social Sciences)” was replaced with Part A course “Scientific Writing and Scientific Communication”. The course and its content will contribute to the achievement of the objective, namely, to offer a common interdisciplinary course to all, with a view to promoting a joint knowledge base of doctoral students, thus also demonstrating interdisciplinarity at the level of the content of compulsory courses.
3. In line with the expert recommendations, the implementation of the communication plan of DSP “Social Science” has started. A list of field leaders, scientists, who will be involved in the implementation of the programme communication plan has been prepared. Cooperation with the RSU International Admissions Office has started to promote popularisation of the programme at foreign educational exhibitions.
4. Taking into account the recommendations provided by the Study Quality Council, changes have been made to the admission regulations of the doctoral study programme “Social Sciences”, as well as to the relevant documents.

2.4. Statistical data on students in the study programme and analysis and assessment of the comparison to the planned number of students within the licencing procedure (the analysis shall be broken down by different study forms, types, and languages).

DSP “Social Sciences” was created for the implementation of the Plan for Development and Consolidation of Study Programmes of the MoES (“To reduce fragmentation of study programmes and strengthen resource sharing at Rīga Stradiņš University”, project No. 8.2.1.0/18/A/014). In addition, the programme has been developed taking into account the requirements for the implementation of the new doctoral studies model. Consequently, the doctoral programme combines five existing programmes and defines one new sub-programme. Given that the programme is new, it is not possible to provide exhaustive statistical data on the number of students, but it is possible to provide statistics on the students of the programmes that were consolidated. It is important to note that unlike the previous programmes DSP “Social Sciences” offers both full-time intramural form and part-time distance learning in English and Latvian.

In addition, it should be noted that the implementation of DSP has been commenced on 1st March 2023. Starting from 01.03.2023, a total of 14 (fourteen) 1st year doctoral students have been transferred (in sub-programme “Law” – 3, “Political Science” – 4, “Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work” – 2, “Communication Culture and Multimedia” – 2, “Health Management” – 0 and “Business Management and Economics” – 3).

Starting from 01.10.2023, there are plans to transfer a total of 15 (fifteen) 2nd year doctoral students (in sub-programme “Law” – 5, “Political Science” – 2, “Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work” – 3, “Communication Culture and Multimedia” – 2, “Health Management” – 0 and “Business Management and Economics” – 3).

In the summer/autumn of 2023, after students resume their studies after academic leave, there are plans to transfer a total of 3 (three) 1st year doctoral students (in sub-programme “Law” – 0,

“Political Science” – 0, “Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work” – 0, “Communication Culture and Multimedia” – 2, “Health Management” – 0 and “Business Management and Economics” – 1) and 3 (three) 2nd year doctoral students (in sub-programme “Law” – 2, “Political Science” – 0, “Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work” – 0, “Communication Culture and Multimedia” – 0, “Health Management” – 0 and “Business Management and Economics” – 1).

No new students will be admitted to DSP “Law”, “Political Science”, “Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work”, “Communication Culture and Multimedia”, “Health Management” and “Business Management and Economics” starting from academic year 2023/2024.

With regard to the analysis of the number of graduates it should be noted that StP “Social Sciences” was licenced in December 2022, therefore, to show the analysis trend in the total number of graduates data about the graduates, who graduated the doctoral study programmes that existed at RSU so far were reviewed, namely, DSP “Law”, “Political Science”, “Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work”, “Communication Culture and Multimedia” and “Business Management and Economics”.

In view of the aforementioned, stability can be noted in the number of graduates of the above-mentioned study programmes. Namely, *10-13 doctoral students graduate the programme every year*. Annex 16 shows transparent statistical data on the students of the doctoral study programmes, which were consolidated into the new DSP “Social Sciences”.

When analysing student drop-outs from the consolidated doctoral study programmes, it can be concluded that most drop out on the 3rd year or the last year of studies. Studies are mainly interrupted at student’s own request and without resuming after an academic leave. In rare cases, the reason for leaving studies is poor academic achievements. Social and economic circumstances and the financial burden are the most common reasons for leaving for those, who pay a tuition fee.

An important opportunity for doctoral students to engage in mobility and promote the implementation of the scientific programme is participation in *COST* actions, which are recognised as scientifically innovative and aim at supporting early-stage scientists for cooperation with the most excellent institutions and groups of scientists. The number of DSP teaching staff involved in *COST* actions should be mentioned, who, in turn, promote the involvement of doctoral students in *COST* actions (for example, one DSP lecturer was involved in *COST* action CA21137 “*Ethics in Dementia*” (EDEM), who also involved 2 doctoral students of the DSP in part of the project). In addition, the doctoral students of DSP, who will be transferred to the new StP, were involved in writing the *Horizon* project MSCA-2022-DN-01 (*MSCA Doctoral Networks 2022*) “*The European Network on Populism and the Environment*”, as well as in its implementation. This project application was created in close cooperation with an RSU visiting researcher.

When analysing data on outgoing student mobility of the consolidated doctoral study programme, it can be concluded that from 2019 to 2023 three doctoral students used the mobility opportunity. It should be noted that one doctoral student was in the mobility programme before the Covid-19 pandemic, namely, in 2019, and two doctoral students implemented mobility opportunities after the Covid-19 pandemic, namely, in 2022/2023 (Annex 8.2 Statistics on student mobility).

2.5. Employment opportunities of the graduates of the study programme.

In accordance with The Future of Jobs Report of the World Economic Forum (until 2025)⁸, it was concluded:

- the pace of technology adoption is expected to remain unabated and may accelerate in some areas;
- automation, in tandem with the Covid-19 recession, is creating a ‘double-disruption’ scenario for workers changing the need for specific jobs, tasks and skills;

- creation of jobs of tomorrow is slower than job destruction due to automation. OECD estimates that 14% of jobs are at high risk of automation;⁹
- the lack of future skills (critical thinking and analysis, problem solving and self-management skills – active learning, flexibility, stress resilience) and the need to retrain will be relevant for at least 40% of the workforce;
- most intellectual workers already work online;
- online learning is becoming increasingly popular, while time to retrain or improve skills is shortening.

According to the data of the World Economic Forum¹⁰, among the top 20 jobs in various sectors, at least half are related to the field of social sciences: digital marketing and strategy specialists, business development professionals, project managers, business services and administration managers, strategic advisors, management and organisation analysts, financial technology engineers, organisation development specialists and risk management specialists. In the future, there will be a need for professionals with education in social sciences able to perform social networking analysis, understand relationships, links and interoperability with clients and various other groups.¹¹ In the labour market, where automation, digitisation and dynamics are essential, the so-called fundamental skills¹², which, regardless of industry or occupation, add added value to what can be done with automation or artificial intelligence, help to operate in a digital environment, enable constant adaptation to new ways of working and occupations,¹³ as well as are an essential part of the effectiveness of the organisation.

When summarising the future skills in the labour market in different sources of information, the following can be highlighted: analytical thinking and innovation capabilities, active learning and teaching strategy, complex problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, originality and initiative, leadership and social impact, technology use, monitoring and control, technology design and programming, stress tolerance and flexibility, emotional intelligence, learning user experience and finding solutions, service orientation, system analysis and evaluation, persuasion and negotiation.¹⁴

Doctoral studies are important in any higher education system and research space, as well as contributes to the development of the national economy, increase of competitiveness and development of products with higher added value. Doctoral degree holders make a significant contribution to driving change and introducing innovating.¹⁵ One of the ten so-called Salzburg principles provides that deepening, transferring or creating new knowledge through an original study in the sector is a key element of doctoral studies. At the same time, doctoral studies should meet both academic requirements and labour market needs. The labour market aspect is linked to the development of methodological and widely used skills, which are integrated into structured doctoral programmes in most European universities. The research work is created in such a way to enable doctoral candidates to learn a set of essential skills that includes creativity, problem solving, critical and analytical thinking, intellectual autonomy and flexibility. Doctoral programmes provide for the possibility to strengthen widely used skills in study courses, with doctoral students implementing individual activities and engaging in international cooperation.

Adapting study programmes to the different learning needs of doctoral students, preparing students for careers, both in and outside the academic environment, and other challenges require a review and restructuring of doctoral education. The main task of the doctoral student is still individual research work for which the doctoral student is awarded his/her doctoral degree, while the European University Institute recommends that 25% of the doctoral programme are devoted to structured teaching – doctoral level study courses mainly with a methodological or interdisciplinary focus, field specifics and professional development. Methodologies and skills-oriented professional development courses contribute to employment opportunities of doctoral students.

To build successful careers within or outside an academic environment, doctoral students require at least the following so-called transversal or widely used skills and character traits: courage (ask the right questions, seek answers from colleagues, experts and literature, as well as critically evaluate the impact of the projects and studies implemented), perseverance (researcher's targeted advancement through the ranks), determination and resilience in the face of challenges, self-motivation,¹⁶ digital skills, research methodology skills, pedagogical skills, management skills, including preparation of project applications and project management, academic language and scientific communication skills, entrepreneurial skills, crisis situation, conflict, stress management and time planning skills, and other skills relevant to careers in all sorts of sectors.¹⁷

According to MoES data, the thematic group of social sciences had the highest number of enrolments (10,620) in academic year 2019/2020, while 161 individuals were enrolled to doctoral level studies in 2019, but 26 doctoral students graduated. Doctoral graduates in social sciences account for 19% of the total doctoral graduates.¹⁸

According to the report of the European University Institute, a good quality indicator of a doctoral study programme is the employment of graduates.¹⁹ Graduate monitoring data from MoES show that the employment of doctoral and master level graduates is high – it exceeds 90%, as well as the income of graduates of doctoral and master level graduates a year after graduation is significantly higher than the average income in Latvia, as well as the average income of all graduates.²⁰ Most of the graduates of the thematic group “Social Sciences, Business and Law” are employed in the following sectors of economic activity: public administration, professional, scientific and technical activities, wholesale and retail trade, finance and insurance, information and communication. According to MoES data, most often young people choose to study social sciences, business, humanities and law in higher education institutions, where there is the highest number of graduates. At the same time, employment in these directions (76.9%) is below the average (80%). The total data on employment of RSU graduates in higher qualification professions is 92%, which is the second highest indicator among Latvian institutions of higher education.

The monitoring also covers the income of graduates when taking up employment and is on average 30% higher than the average wage in the country. In the thematic group of social sciences and business, income is the third highest after agriculture and life sciences, mathematics and IT groups. There is a trend that positions with a significant combination of digital and non-cognitive skills (communication, team work, planning, etc.) are better paid.²¹ RSU is among those higher education institutions, whose graduates' employment and income in the tax year 2019 are higher than average.

According to the forecasts of the Ministry of Economy on supply and demand for labour force with higher education broken down by thematic groups of education “Social Sciences, Business and Law”, labour demand in 2027 is expected to be 93% of supply.²²

RSU's new StP “Social Sciences” is in line with demand of the Latvian and European labour market and education development trends, offering integration among several sectors (political science, sociology, social work, anthropology, mass media and communication, management, economics, law). It stimulates independent learning and lifelong learning, acquisition of new knowledge and competence building, and updates the skills of tomorrow highlighted in research (cooperation, communication, time planning, creativity, critical thinking, innovative solutions, project and team management), which play an important role both in building academic careers and careers outside the academic environment.

Employers and graduates are involved in the development and implementation of the StP. The level of engagement starts with action in evaluating StP, where graduates are invited to participate for the purposes of identifying their experience and the application of the acquired knowledge and skills in practice, and also employers. The employment of doctoral students is

already positive. StP doctoral students work in research institutes. Several doctoral students are employed at the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, the purpose of which is to carry out scientific activities, analytical research and provide expert opinion regarding Latvia's challenges, development scenarios and strategy in the international and regional security, political and economic system (information in [Latvian](#), [English](#)). 3 doctoral students are employed by the Latvian Prosecution Office and courts (information in [Latvian](#), [English](#)). 2 doctoral students have become sworn advocates because, in accordance with Section 14 of the Advocacy Law, doctors of law are partially exempted from the sworn advocate's examination (information in [Latvian](#), [English](#)), etc.

3. Resources and provision

3.1. Description of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision and financial provision and assessment of compliance with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes, and the changes made since the beginning of implementation of the study programme, their impact of the study quality.

General information

The total area of library premises is 2044 m², including premises to serve readers – 1318 m² (290 places for readers, 81 computer places, wireless internet). The open access loan includes well-equipped premises, the possibility to loan books for home use, the use of self-service equipment, a place for reading clubs and individual work. To provide access to facilities for visitors with reduced mobility, there is a lift in the Library in the central building allowing the library users to move from floor to floor. The library is located in the main RSU building (Rīga, Dzirciema iela 16), and it has three branches:

- Rīga – in the RSU Red Cross Medical College Information Centre for Latvian health care specialists (J. Asara iela 5) and in the Medical Education Technology Centre, METC (Anņīņmuižas bulv. 26a);
- RSU Liepāja Branch Library (Riņķu iela 24/26).

Library services: large collection of information resources, consultations in searching information, as well as searching based on thematic requests. Library specialists read information literacy classes, which are included in study programmes and offer support to researchers (information in [Latvian](#), [English](#)).

Students can communicate with the Library remotely on different matters by phone or on help.rsu.lv. Information resources, which are not available in the collection of the RSU library, can be ordered from other libraries using the Interlibrary Loan (ILL) or International Interlibrary Loan (IILL).

Every year the library environment is gradually improved and modernised, new technologies and services are introduced (self-service devices with the possibility for users to borrow books by themselves, return, renew them, view own reader account, as well as print, copy, scan, use multifunctional devices). At the entrance to the RSU building art Dzirciema iela 16 and J.Asara iela 5, there are book returning units, where books can be returned to the library also outside its working hours.

Information resources

The collection included ~566,800 physical units, including ~258,600 books. The subscribed databases provide access to ~464,700 subscribed electronic resource units (about 90% of these are e-books).

The funding for resources is growing. It was EUR 31 per Library user in 2021. Approximately 89% of the budget intended for assembly of the collection are used for subscription to electronic resources/purchasing of e-books.

Table 3. Library financing for creation of the collection and provision of resources over the last six years

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Nov 2022
Assigned financing (EUR)	350,400	442,360	475,460	503,480	507,234	602,910
incl. subscribed resources	274,000	301,870	317,532	337,500	339,360	427,872
incl. study platform		53,542	76,230	81,675	87,428	90,925

Funding for the subscription to or purchasing of resources comes from the total funding of the library. Several special sector databases and multisectoral resources are subscribed every year, as well as books and e-books are purchased for study programmes and scientific research.

Supply of e-resources provided by the Library corresponding to the doctoral study programme “Social Sciences” and sub-programmes “Law”, “Political Science”, “Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work”, “Communication Culture and Multimedia”, “Health Management” and “Business Management and Economics”

The RSU Library provides lecturers and students with access to Latvian and international electronic resources. 27 online e-resources are available, which are widely used in the programme “Social Sciences” and in each sub-programme.

The use of intersectoral resources within the programme is emphasised when developing intersectoral research. Namely, in addition to characteristic resources, each sub-programme uses resources from other sectors, which also shows and improved the development of interdisciplinary approaches and intersectoral research.

RSU students and lecturers can access the Library’s subscribed databases remotely through the MyRSU student portal or Academic Portal using the username and password assigned by RSU.²³

The methodological material base is tailored specifically to social sciences and also to each of the sub-programmes – “Law”, “Political Science”, “Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work”, “Communication Culture and Multimedia”, “Health Management” and “Business Management and Economics”. In addition, a large number of resources are available for the sub-programme “Health Management”, which can be consulted in the catalogue under “Medicine and Healthcare” (information in [Latvian](#), [English](#)).

In particular, the RSU library system is designed to make it possible for each sub-programme to identify resources that are more characteristic to it by searching by field or even sub-field of science within each group of science.

In addition, the opportunity is offered to participate in the virtual exhibitions of the RSU Library (information in [Latvian](#), [English](#)). e-Resources include two e-book databases and seven

multi-disciplinary full-text databases of journals, as well as the *Scopus* and *Web of Science* databases of publication bibliography and citation information important to the doctoral programme.

The e-books used in the implementation of sub-programmes “Law”, “Political Science”, “Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work”, “Communication Culture and Multimedia”, “Health Management” and “Business Management and Economics” and other relevant thematic areas are available in the subscribed databases *ebook Academic Collection (EBSCO)* and *Ebook Central (Proquest)*. For example, the database *ebook Academic Collection (EBSCO)* contains 18,109 e-books, when searching by subject “Law”, but *Ebook Central (Proquest)* – contains 9158 e-books. Subscribed multidisciplinary databases *Ebook Central (ProQuest)* and *EBSCO eBook Academic Collection* offer e-books in different fields and from different publishers that provide selected information results searching by various topics / keywords.

The full texts of scientific articles in social sciences are available in subscribed databases: *SAGE Premier 2021*, *Communication Source (EBSCO)*, *Sociology Source Ultimate (EBSCO)*, *PsycARTICLES (APA)*, *Wiley Online Journals*, *Science Direct*, *Academic Search Complete (EBSCO)*. The single information search engine Primo shows 1326 journal names in “Law”, 2224 journal names in “Business, Economy & Management” and 3127 journal names in “Social Sciences”. Many databases offer a more detailed breakdown in accordance with the breakdown of sub-programmes or sub-fields of sciences.

Relevant resources in social sciences may be searched also in bibliographic and citation information databases *Web of Science* and *Scopus*, where the search function can be used to select all the sub-programmes included in DSP “Social Sciences”.

On the Library website, section List of recommended e-books (information in [Latvian, English](#)) summarises the e-books in study programmes – both purchased and from subscribed databases. The following sections are available in the summary: “Law”, “Business and Economics”, “Political Science”, “Communication Science”, “Sociology”, “Social Work”, “Social Anthropology”, “Health Management”, these sections correspond to the breakdown of sub-programmes.

Doctoral theses from many countries of the world in different fields of sciences, including social sciences, are available in the database *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global: The Sciences and Engineering Collection*.

Students also have access to information and reference databases such as *Encyclopaedia Britannica Academic Edition*, *Letonika*, *LETA news archive*, *Nozare.lv*, *News.lv (Lursoft)*.

In 2022, a new resource – the *Writefull* tool was subscribed, which provides recommendations, possible better versions for improving a scientific text (developed specifically for researchers and students, and its feedback is adapted to academic writing). This tool is used in all sub-programmes.

The statistics of usage of databases is high. It is evaluated once a semester. Statistics indicators of usage tend to increase.

Several open access resources are available, for example, open access e-resources on different topics of social sciences summarised by Library employees, as well as databases such as *ERIH Plus* and *ICI Copernicus*, which are used at the level of sub-programmes “Law”, “Political Science”, “Social Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work”, “Communication Culture and Multimedia”, “Health Management” and “Business Management and Economics”.²⁴

In addition, it should be noted that available databases in the medical field may be used for interdisciplinary research in social sciences, taking into account the scope of research in social sciences such as health management, medical law, health policy, etc. This also complements the scientific value of the “Health Management” sub-programme.

The following databases are available at RSU on medicine and medical sciences:

- e-book databases *ClinicalKey Books* (Elsevier), *AccessMedicine* (McGraw-Hill), *Access Pharmacy* (McGraw-Hill);
- anatomical 3D educational resource *Anatomy Next*;
- databases of journal articles *Health Research Premium Collection* (ProQuest), *MEDLINE Complete* (EBSCO), *Dentistry & Oral Sciences Source* (EBSCO), *BMJ Journals*, *ClinicalKey Journals* (Elsevier);
- evidence-based medical databases *ClinicalKey Clinical Overviews* (Elsevier), *The Cochrane Library* (Wiley), *DynaMed* (EBSCO);
- resources created by the Library, for example, open access e-resources on different medical and healthcare topics summarised by Library employees (information in [Latvian](#), [English](#)), Analytical databased of medicine and healthcare in the Library information system ALEPH (information in [Latvian](#), [English](#)).

Procedure for supplementation of the library collection and database subscriptions

RSU has in place a support process, which is implemented by the Library, which defines how to provide RSU's study programmes and scientific research activity with necessary information sources and services. Process description defines the following: 1) planning of acquisition of information sources, evaluation and supplementing of supplies and 2) determination of the level of satisfaction of users.

Subscription to databases takes place after trial periods, analysis of usage statistics, user feedback and costs.

In order to improve the compliance of the Library collection with the needs of students, work is ongoing with lists of study course readings, there is cooperation with university lecturers to inform about the situation with supplies of study course literature. Lecturers and students can send orders / recommendations for supplementing the collection electronically on help.rsu.lv.

Availability of library data in the digital environment of the higher education institution

The *Primo* unified search engine is used for management of e-resources, which ensures quick and rationalised search in e-resources. Information on databases is available also from the RSU Student portal *MyRSU*.

RSU students can access graduation papers of students and other RSU publications in the Institutional Repository.

From 2020, publications of RSU's academic and scientific staff are entered in the new scientific activity information system *Pure*. It is a unique tool for searching for research in RSU research areas.

Library news can be followed on the Library website (information in [Latvian](#), [English](#)), in the *Facebook* profile. In 2021, a new section "Research Support" was created on the website to help researcher to find faster and more conveniently the information necessary at different stages of research – from idea to the dissemination of research results (information in [Latvian](#), [English](#)).

RSU Library is an accredited library of national importance

Another accreditation was received in November 2021. The library's resources and services can be evaluated as very good, and they meet the demand of students and teaching staff to ensure successful completion of the respective study course. Simple procedures were introduced to recommend supplementing the collection or contact the Library regarding its services. Surveys of both students and teaching staff confirm a good and very good assessment of the Library. E-resources are currently a priority of the RSU Library as other universities of the world.

In order to promote international cooperation in research and ensure coordinated exchange of scientific data at European level, RSU joined the European Open Science Cloud Association (information in [Latvian](#), [English](#)). The Association is a platform to look for new partners, develop cooperation with data-intensive research infrastructures and learn about new international projects. Membership allows the RSU to use a number of services, including access to research data repositories, software solutions and training activities. It enables large-scale studies, simulations and other activities, based on common standards, using available data and software resources.

On 20 October 2022, RSU obtained a grant in *Horizon 2020 EOSC-Future* project and *RD-Alliance* call *Cross-disciplinary Science Adoption #2*. The supported project *Increasing FAIRness of data processing in Occupational Health and Safety* will be implemented by the RSU Research Department in cooperation with the Institute of Occupational Safety and Environmental Health from January to July 2023. The project intends to organise and process the results of the long-standing surveys on occupational safety in line with international industry standards, making them available to researchers. At the same time, it is planned to validate the procedures and documents already developed, as well as to create guidelines for work with research data.

Distribution of funding for one study place by expenditure items

The costs by sub-programme are on average similar. The difference arises when doctoral grants are granted for ensuring the needs of the study process according to the topic of the doctoral thesis. Grants are awarded by the RSU Council of Doctoral Studies for a period of up to 12 months. Grants are awarded using a competition procedure.

The prepared cost estimate shows that the study programme is fully profitable with the number of students to be enrolled as indicated in Table 7. As a result, the new study programme could start operating to a similar extent and operate profitably from the first academic year.

The study programme will be implemented by the RSU Department of Doctoral Studies in cooperation with the RSU Faculty of European Studies, Faculty of Communication, Faculty of

Law and staff of other academic structural units. Cooperation with other academic structural units of the RSU will also be developed as necessary.

Table 3. Costs by cost items.

Criterion/ Study programme	Full-time, Latvian	Full-time, English	Part-time Distance learning, Latvian	Part-time Distance learning, English*
Source of funding	Funds of private and legal persons and State budget			
Total number of Credit Points in the programme	176	176	176	176
Duration of studies, years	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.5
Planned number of enrolled students in the first year	11	10	11	8
Estimated number of students in four years of studies	40	40	40	29
Defined tuition fee per year*	4890	6000	3000	4500
Cost structure				
Estimated average income and expenses per student per year, EUR	4293	6000	2700	4500
Academic staff, %	37.9	39.4	57.8	41.2
Doctoral study grants, %	10.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Department resources, %	2.9	3.0	2.2	1.6
Other direct expenditure, %	12.3	13.2	18.2	16.4
Fixed costs, %	1.8	2.1	2.4	4.0
Scientific infrastructure and overhead costs, %	26.4	40.3	18.4	31.0
For capital investments (equipment) and development, %	8.5	2.0	1.0	5.8

* Discounts may be granted to students in accordance with the Regulations on discounts on the tuition fee at Rīga Stradiņš University.

The costs by sub-programme are on average similar. The difference arises when doctoral grants are granted for ensuring the needs of the study process according to the topic of the doctoral thesis. Grants are awarded by the RSU Council of Doctoral Studies for a period of up to 12 months. Grants are awarded using a competition procedure.

The prepared cost estimate shows that the StP is fully profitable with the number of students to be enrolled as indicated in Table 3. As a result, the new study programme could start operating to a similar extent and operate profitably from the first academic year.

The StP will be implemented by the RSU Department of Doctoral Studies in cooperation with the RSU Faculty of European Studies, Faculty of Communication, Faculty of Law and staff of other academic structural units. Cooperation with other academic structural units of the RSU will also be developed as necessary.

3.2. Analysis and assessment of the changes to the composition of the teaching staff (impact on the quality of studies, implementation conditions and compliance with the requirements of regulatory enactments).

Given that StP “Social Sciences” was licensed in December 2022, no major changes affecting the composition of teaching staff and the qualifications of teaching staff are identified. At the same time, it should be noted that StP “Social Sciences” employs the most experienced researchers and academic staff who continuously increase their scientific and academic capacity. The lecturers include a number of leaders of their science sub-sectors in Latvia and in a wider scientific and practical context. Among them is one of the most well-known experts in the communication sector in Latvia *Dr. Sergejs Kruks* and *Dr. Andra Rožukalne*, who has also been a long-time head of the Latvian Association of Journalists and the first ombudsman of Latvian public media. Latvia’s well-known social anthropologist *Dr. Klāvs Sedlenieks* should also be noted. There are also an opinion and research leader in political science and international relations *Dr. Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova*, who is also the Director of the RSU China Studies Centre, worked at the Center for East Asian Studies, Stanford University (United States), she is a member of the European Think-tank Network on China (ETNC), and *Dr. Andris Sprūds*, who is the Chairperson of the European Affairs Commission of the Saeima and the long-term director of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs. Among the representatives of law *Dr. Sandra Kaija*, who also holds the position of a judge of the Supreme Court of Latvia, prof. *Dr. Uldis Ķinis*, who was previously a long-term judge of the Constitutional Court of Latvia, should also be mentioned. Young researcher should also be mentioned: *Ph. D. Karina Palkova*, who is a sworn advocate and also a researcher who was one of the scientists included in the Latvian Science Calendar in 2021, as well as *Ph. D. Karina Zalcmāne*, who obtained a doctoral degree in sports law and is active in the field of international sports law, holding the position of a member of the Board of Directors of the International Association of Sports Law. Among visiting lecturers of management science, *Dr. Henrijs Kaļķis* should be mentioned, who is one of the youngest professors in Latvia and one of the scientists included in the last Latvian Science Calendar.

Lecturers also include ten recipients of the prestigious US Fulbright Research Scholarship: *Dr. Agrita Kiopa*, *Dr. Sergejs Kruks*, *Dr. Gunda Reire*, *Dr. Henrijs Kaļķis* (as a visiting lecturer), *Dr. Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova*, *Dr. Māris Andžāns*, *Dr. Andris Sprūds*, *Dr. Kārlis Bukovskis*, *Dr. Ainārs Dimants*, as well as professor *Dzintra Atstāja*, who took part in the teacher qualification improvement project in digital sciences at the University at Buffalo (United States). Similarly, the lecturers of the new study programme received scholarships from various other organisations and carried out research work in different countries of the world (see Table 9).

It should also be noted that there is an extensive participation of teachers involved in the doctoral study programme in projects at both national and international level. For example, the teaching staff involved in the doctoral study programme implemented several NRP projects (in 2020, project No. VPP-COVID-2020/1-0013 “Living with COVID-19: Evaluation of Combatting the Crisis Caused by the Coronavirus in Latvia and Proposals for Resilience of Society in the Future” and project No. VPP-COVID-2020/1-0010 “Economic, Political and Legal Framework for Preserving Latvia’s Economic Potential and Promoting Competitiveness after the Pandemic Crisis (reCOVery-LV)”). Teaching staff is also involved in the fundamental and applied research projects announced by the Latvian Council of Science, for example, projects “Values in Action: Development of Responsible, Secure and Educated Civil Society with Research and Action Models” (2020), “Quadruple Helix Concept (QHC) as Base of the Next Generation PPP Model” (2021. gads), “(Re)moving Ties: Relatedness in Contemporary Mobile Work Regimes” (2022), etc.

In 2021, the Chapter of Orders appointed as Commander of the Cross of Recognition ex-Dean of the Faculty of European Studies of Rīga Stradiņš University, long-term Director of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Professor *Dr. sc. pol.* Andris Sprūds. On 13 July 2021, the State President Egils Levits issued a commendation certificate to professor *Dr. iur.* Andrejs Vilks at the Riga Castle, thus giving appreciation to his life contribution to general benefit of society. On 17 October 2022, the Chapter of Orders appointed *Dr. iur.* Aldis Lieljuksis, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law of Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU), as Commander of the Cross.

3.3. In case of doctoral study programmes, specify and provide the justification as to whether the degrees are awarded in view of the developments and findings in the fields of science or artistic creative work.

The main lines of research corresponding to the DSP “Social Sciences”, in which a scientific degree is awarded by defending a doctoral thesis, is the group of social sciences. In line with the requirements of the interdisciplinary approach, research focuses on the challenges of several groups of social sciences and other fields of sciences, which are addressed primarily from a social sciences perspective. However, since the issue of licensing and accreditation of StP outside study directions has not yet been arranged in Latvia, as provided for by the new doctoral studies model and the vision of MoES, the specific research direction of StP was chosen in accordance with the recommendations of QAHE as well as other aspects. Consequently, the direction for obtaining a scientific degree corresponds to the fields and sub-fields defined by the Cabinet of Ministers.¹¹ The DSP “Social Sciences” is licenced and the decision of the Study Quality Council indicates that a scientific doctoral degree doctor of science (*Ph. D.*) in social sciences is awarded.

The innovative study (thesis) of each doctoral student, the publication of a doctoral student on the topic of the doctoral thesis (e.g. scientific articles, set of publications, monograph) and patents related to the doctoral thesis research may be considered the contribution to and achievements in each field of science, where a scientific doctoral degree is awarded. One of the conditions for starting promotion is the completion of an appropriate doctoral programme and publications.

The requirements of Section 8(1)(1) of the Law on Scientific Activity should also be noted, which confirm that the research conducted by RSU at doctoral level is based in the respective fields of science. The law provides that a scientist has the right to freely choose the direction and methods of scientific research. StP offers to conduct interdisciplinary research, which respectively broadens the boundaries of research. The aim of the StP, in line with the new doctoral studies model, is also to strengthen the capacity of scientists and develop interdisciplinary research. The Law on Scientific Activity opens up the possibility to ensure the activities of a scientist not only in specific fields and sub-fields of science, but also in groups of fields of sciences.

The entire study process in the doctoral study programme is based on scientific research and scientific input in the relevant field of science, as well as is closely related to fulfilment of the requirements for starting promotion, determining compliance with the criteria, for example, the doctoral student needs two international publications to complete the doctoral study programme and commence the promotion process. These conditions are described both in the Doctoral Studies Academic Regulations and in the Regulations on the Functioning of Doctoral Councils and the Procedure of Promotion.

A number of requirements for publications and starting of promotions to obtain a degree are laid down in the Regulations on the Functioning of Doctoral Councils and the Procedure of

¹¹ Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 49 of 23.01.2018 “On the Fields and Sub-Fields of Science of Latvia”, available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/296661-noteikumi-par-latvijas-zinatnes-nozare-un-apaksnozarem>

Promotion¹². For the commencement of the promotion process, the Applicant shall submit to the RSU Department of Doctoral Studies:

- A statement of the higher education institution regarding the performance of the doctoral study programme or, if the Applicant has not acquired an appropriate programme, regarding the passing of examinations in the selected field, sub-field and foreign language;
- Copies of the lists of scientific publications reflecting the progress and results of the doctoral thesis and the most relevant publications:
 - if the doctoral thesis is developed as a thesis – with at least two internationally anonymously reviewed publications;
 - if the doctoral thesis is developed as a thematically unified set of scientific publications – with least four internationally anonymously reviewed publications;
 - if the doctoral thesis is developed as a scientific monograph – with at least one internationally anonymously reviewed publication.

Publications must be anonymously reviewed in a scientific journal or conference proceedings indexed in the *SCOPUS*, *Web of Science* or included in ERIH+ database. More information on the promotion see on the RSU website (in [Latvian](#) and [English](#)). The current Regulations on the Activities of the Promotion Councils and the Procedure of Promotion are available in [Latvian](#), [English](#).

The Doctoral Studies Regulations (the up-to-date version is available in [Latvian](#) only), which was approved at the meeting of the RSU Senate of 20.09.2022, min. No. 2-S-1/7/2022, contain the following requirements to doctoral students regarding publications:

- To recognise the four-year doctoral study programme successfully completed, the doctoral student should participate in all the courses provided for in the doctoral study programme and perform scientific activity (on the topic of the doctoral thesis) during doctoral studies, which corresponds to at least one of the following criteria:
 - Two anonymously reviewed scientific publications in scientific journals or conference proceedings indexed in the *SCOPUS* or *Web of Science* or included in the ERIH+ database;
 - One anonymously reviewed scientific publication in a scientific edition or conference proceedings indexed in the *SCOPUS* or *Web of Science* or included in the ERIH+ database and a reviewed scientific monograph on one scientific topic or problem and it contains a bibliography.
- To recognise the three-year doctoral study programme successfully completed, the doctoral student should attend all the courses provided for in the doctoral study programme and perform scientific activity (on the topic of the doctoral thesis) during doctoral studies, which corresponds to at least one of the following criteria:
 - One anonymously reviewed scientific publications in a scientific edition or conference proceedings indexed in the *SCOPUS* or *Web of Science* or included in the ERIH+ database;
 - Peer-reviewed scientific monograph on one scientific topic or problem and it contains a bibliography.

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

¹² Approved at the meeting of the RSU Senate of 20.09.2022, min. No. 2-S-1/7/2022.

4.1. Assessment of the fulfilment of the plan regarding the implementation of the recommendations provided by the study programme licencing experts and the assessment of the impact of the given recommendations on the study quality or the improvement of processes within the study programme.

Taking into account the decision No. 2022/31-L of the Study Quality Council of 16 November 2022, as well as the recommendations of QAHE experts, a plan for implementation of the recommendations provided has been prepared.

Overall, the recommendations of both the Study Quality Council and experts were taken into account. In strengthening cooperation with the private sector, changes have been made to the composition of the StP's Study Quality Council providing for the possibility of working also specifically for private sector representatives. At the same time, it should be noted that the abovementioned recommendation can also be well implemented in the content part of study courses, namely by performing cross-sectoral work, research focusing on industrial research, taking into account the demand defined in the industry.

In order to ensure greater transparency of interdisciplinarity not only in courses on sub-fields but also at the level of compulsory courses, Part A study course "Information Literacy in Science (Social Sciences)", B_018 was replaced with Part A course "Scientific Writing and Scientific Communication". The content of this course will contribute to the achievement of the objective, namely, to offer a common interdisciplinary course to all, with a view to promoting a joint knowledge base of doctoral students, thus also demonstrating interdisciplinarity at the level of the content of compulsory courses.

In addition, a communication strategy has been launched for the promotion of the new StP, which includes the promotion of the cross-sectoral programme and the promotion of science through cooperation between private and public sectors. Practical cooperation has been launched with the scientific research institute *Baltic Studies Centre*, which announced two vacancies for researchers in interdisciplinary European Union *Horizon* projects on digitisation and data economy:

- Maximising the Co-Benefits of Agricultural Digitalisation Through Conducive Digital Ecosystems - CODECS;
- Pathways Towards a Fair, Inclusive and Innovative Data Economy for Sustainable Food Systems - Data4Food2030.

This cooperation is a pilot project in which potential doctoral students of StP "Social Sciences" may be involved.

In addition, it should be noted that updated StP admission regulations have been approved (taking into account the recommendations provided in decision No. 2022/31-L of the Study Quality Council of 16 November 2022). Those changes harmonise the conditions for admission requirements within sub-programmes, making them sufficiently clear, which at the same time provides an opportunity to better ascertain the relevant level of knowledge and understanding of the potential student in the scientific field of the sub-programme concerned. At the same time, it should be noted that in accordance with the requirements of Paragraph 52 of order No. 1-PB-2/389/2022 of RSU Rector of 18.07.2022 "Rīga Stradiņš University Procedure of Admission to Study Programmes in English", the applicant must prove to the university his/her English language proficiency at least at level B2 in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Thus, it is ensured that English language flow students are required to have knowledge of English at least at level B2.

In general, the recommendations provided by the licensing experts of the DSP "Social Sciences", as well as the accreditation experts of the consolidated study programmes, have been

taken into account. The expert recommendation implementation plan attached in Annex 11 describes which recommendations are already implemented in the programmes, as well as recommendations that are implemented annually throughout the entire period, or will be implemented over a longer period of time.