

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Rīga Stradiņš University

Study field: Education and Pedagogy

Experts:

1. Linda Pavītola (Chair of the Experts Group)
2. Daniel Marinho (Secretary of the Experts Group)
3. Peter Van Petegem
4. Laima Kirtovska (Employers' Confederation of Latvia)
5. Anete Dzērve (Student Union of Latvia)

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

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

The study field "Education and Pedagogy" is being evaluated in the context of the consolidation of the Latvian Academy of Sports Education (LASE) and Riga Stradiņš University (RSU). According to the decision of the Ministry of Education and Science on 1 July 2024, LASE has been integrated into RSU and operates as a separate structural unit. Its official name is Riga Stradiņš University Latvian Academy of Sports Education (RSU LASE). The consolidation process includes many review, adaptation, and integration processes, regarding the infrastructure and accommodation, therefore a targeted review and alignment of the various internal frameworks has been ongoing. As far as possible, all RSU internal regulations apply to the RSU LASE.

The study field "Education and Pedagogy" aligns with RSU strategic plans to enhance study and research quality, ensuring LASE's successful integration into the RSU system. The focus is on preparing specialists for educational environments, emphasizing inclusive education and professional supervision. The three interconnected study programmes offer opportunities for continued studies:

- 1) the short-cycle study programme "Sports and Education Specialist",
- 2) the first-cycle study programme "Health, Physical Activity and Security",
- 3) the second-cycle study programme "Supervision".

RSU, as a University of Science, has a strong and structured tradition in quality assurance processes with clear procedures and responsibilities. The willingness is present to integrate RSU LASE as a structural unit. Strengths of the study field include experienced academic staff, stable employer cooperation, and extensive infrastructure like a modern Sports Science Research Laboratory and Health Sports Research Centre. Academic integrity is maintained through policies and tools like Turnitin, and supported by regular training.

RSU has a digitalized and automated quality assurance system, using the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle and involving various stakeholders. Statistical data analysis supports decision-making. RSU provides extensive IT support, digital tools, and a comprehensive e-learning platform. The quality assurance process at LASE before the consolidation, previously based on small scale and short communication lines, needs more formal rules and procedures due to integration with RSU. This adaptation process should involve all stakeholders, including students.

The RSU Library offers vast resources, and research activities are well-supported. The RSU LASE library's literature should be updated, and longer working hours considered. There are concerns about students' English language skills and their compatibility with required literature, suggesting the need for support to improve their English.

Comprehensive student support services are available, including special needs assistance and career guidance. However, the transition phase requires careful attention to address uncertainties among RSU LASE staff, emphasizing clear communication and maintaining the identity of the RSU LASE.

RSU promotes student involvement in scientific activities and supports academic staff's professional competence enhancement. There are differences observed in research outputs among teaching staff that point to a more integrated strategy. Effective mechanisms are in place for academic staff and their involvement in research, however, when analyzing in detail the list of the publications

presented by the teaching staff, the most relevant ones are not fully related to “Education and Pedagogy” and there is a gap on the publications in the most significant and impactful journals in this study field associated with the study programmes.

RSU and RSU LASE have strong cooperation networks for internships and international partnerships, focusing on sports education. Mobility systems for staff and students are well-structured. However, there is a need to expand international cooperation networks with institutions and organizations that can enhance global engagement and collaboration specifically within the study field “Education and Pedagogy” and increase the mobility of academic staff and students. Currently, there are no foreign academic staff in any of the programmes, even in remote mode. This lack of an international perspective could limit the diversity of opinions and teaching methods.

During the on-site visit, the experts were not convinced of the necessary adjustments made in the "Supervision" study programme regarding the change to the study field of "Education and Pedagogy". Academic staff of the study field should be encouraged to review and revise the literature listed in course descriptions to ensure that the study courses in all study programmes include the most recent and relevant publications as well as topics on sports ethics and integrity, academic integrity, and research ethics.

Also, engaging employers not only in providing internships but also in the continuous improvement of the study field, content of the study courses, and research projects would be of great importance. It is important to develop specific and targeted activities to attract students to the study programme “Supervision”, addressing the lack of admissions from 2022.

Although evaluation experts have identified weaknesses of the study programmes included in the study field, according to the experts’ opinion, there are no deficiencies identified that cannot be eliminated during the 2 to 6 year accreditation period. There are no obstacles to implementing the study programmes in all the declared forms in Latvian.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

I - Assessment of the Study Field

1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1.

Self-Assessment Report (SAR), section 2.1.1, clearly defines the aims of the study field “Education and Pedagogy”. It’s aimed at the theoretical and practical preparation of qualified specialists for work in educational and pedagogical environments with various groups of society – children, young people, and professionals. The achievement of the aims is clearly characterized by the formulations of the necessary competencies for qualified specialists following the specifics of the study programmes included in the study field (StF). It emphasizes skills both for the implementation of competencies in education in an inclusive context and for the provision of professional supervision support. The awareness of the aims was confirmed at the on-site meeting with the directors of the study programmes “Sports and Education Specialist”, “Health, Physical Activity, and Security,” and “Supervision”, as well as the academic staff, head of the study field, and RSU management.

The compliance of the StF and the study programmes included in it with the main directions of the strategic development of the RSU is disclosed in the Plan for Quality of Studies and Development of Study Programmes and the RSU Science Development Plan (SAR, p. 25), which, in the context of the RSU and LASE consolidation process, emphasizes the direction towards improving the quality of studies and research processes, as well as the integration of LASE into the RSU Study Programmes Quality Management System. Both of the aforementioned development plans and the StF objectives

are aimed at meeting the needs of society and the national economy, promoting a) the physical, emotional, and social development of preschool-aged children and individuals with special needs, b) implementation of competency-based education in the fields of health, physical activity, and safety in the areas of national defence and health education, and c) provision of professional supervision support to individuals, groups, and organizations in the fields of education and social care (SAR, p. 25).

As presented in the SAR, there are interconnections among the three study programmes included in the StF - after completion of the short-cycle study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" and obtaining a qualification as a teacher or sports coach, students can continue their studies in the professional bachelor's study programme "Health, Physical Activity, and Security" and obtain a professional bachelor's degree in teacher education. At the second cycle professional study programme "Supervision" students can obtain a master's degree in pedagogy and a qualification as a supervisor.

The idea of practice-based cooperation between the first and second-cycle study programmes is very valuable, where "students of the second-cycle study programme "Supervision" provide consultations (supervisions) to bachelor's students as part of their placement" (SAR, p. 26). According to the expert's opinion, this type of cooperation would ensure high-quality experience in consulting, analysis, and reflection of one's professional activities, as well as the integration of theoretical knowledge into practice.

1.1.2.

SAR section 2.1.2 describes the SWOT analysis conducted for the study field "Education and Pedagogy" (SAR, p. 26). The SAR indicates that it was developed by representatives of RSU and RSU LASE, in accordance with the existing development strategies and the context of the consolidation process. Among the strengths of the StF, the SAR states the necessity of professional study programmes for the Latvian economy, long-term and stable cooperation with employers, extensive infrastructure including a modern Health Care Research Centre in sports, as well as experienced, qualified, and professional academic staff, which the evaluation experts confirmed during an on-site visit.

The experts also had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the StF Development Plan (SAR Annex: 4.1_Anx_Development_Plan_StD), which describes objectives, activities, and performance indicators for 2024-2027. The Development Plan addresses both identified weaknesses and threats, as well as identified opportunities, f.ex., building scientific research capacity, improving the student and academic staff support system, promoting study programmes as well as the development of international cooperation, and ensuring synergy between the study process and the industry. Regarding the StF Development Plan, the extension of educational and pedagogical topics in research in an interdisciplinary framework is positively valued by experts, as is the indicated amount of work already done in achieving the objectives. Although the SWOT analysis mentioned the negative impact of the consolidation process of sectoral universities as a threat, the on-site meetings with RSU and StF management showed to experts that the RSU has a clear vision of the steps needed to be taken to integrate the study field into the RSU and RSU LASE structure, and SAR (p. 29) describes steps towards the threat mitigation opportunities, as well as describes the unity of RSU and RSU LASE vision, mission and development directions (SAR, Table 1, p. 5).

However, it should be noted that the StF Development Plan (SAR Annex: 4.1_Anx_Development_Plan_StD) does not include significant weaknesses and threats identified in SWOT analysis that would require a solution in the context of ensuring the quality of the study process, f.ex.: a) student dropout rates in undergraduate study programmes and b) high teaching load for academic staff, and c) limited administrative staff capacity.

1.1.3.

During the on-site meeting, the director of the StF stated that the management structure of the study field is consistent with the practice implemented in the field, including the institutional, study programme, individual (students, lecturers) levels, and the employer's perspective. This is visually well revealed in the management structure (Figure 4.2. of SAR Annex: 4.2_anx_RSU management structure of study direction), where the synergy of all the mentioned levels is visible. However, the StF management structure attached to the SAR does not reveal more detailed information about the RSU LASE sub-structures participating in the implementation of the StF. After experts requested additional information, Annex Pap3.1_piel_Structure_LASE_EN_20_01_2025 was submitted, which describes the management of StF in the structure of RSU LASE.

SAR emphasizes the efficiency of the management structure, which can be identified in the context of the RSU quality policy (approved by RSU Council on 18/01/2023), however, 14 quality criteria (SAR, p. 30) are not disclosed, which characterize the progress towards the development of the study field. The role of the head of the study field and director of study programmes is described, however, the efficiency of decision-making and the role of the support provided by the administrative and technical staff are not analysed.

Meetings with employers and students during the on-site visit revealed a good collaboration with employers regarding internship placements and with the community, especially sports federations, schools, and military institutions. Employers highly evaluate students and graduates' professional skills, however, there could be greater involvement of employers in the development of the study programmes.

1.1.4.

RSU has a clear and logical system and procedures set up for the admission of students (Admission Regulations see <https://www.rsu.lv/en/study-here/admissions>; SAR Annex 23.1, Paragraph 1.4). RSU admission policy, matriculation procedures, and criteria provide the conditions for open and equal competition (SAR, p. 31). RSU and RSU LASE have provided a List of Internal Laws and Regulations valid in both institutions (SAR Annex 1).

SAR states that the procedures for the recognition of the study period have been introduced (SAR, p. 31). The recognition of qualifications is based on cooperation with other higher education institutions, quality assurance agencies, and the National ENIC/NARIC Centre. It is consistent with the principles of the Lisbon Convention. A positive trend is the existence of a unified Recognition Commission for all thematic areas of education, ensuring the involvement of an expert in the relevant field in each individual case, which supports the principle of equal attitude. A student delegated by the Student Union is also included in this commission.

Regarding the recognition of prior non-formal education, SAR (p. 31) states that a system has been created and procedures have been developed/introduced at RSU. SAR Annex 23.1 "Compliance of RSU Study Programmes with Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)", Paragraph 1.4 presents that the person has the right to apply to RSU with an application regarding recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside formal education or in professional experience, as well as learning outcomes achieved in prior learning. The same document describes the process step-by-step and the information in Latvian is available online (<https://www.rsu.lv/studiju-iespejas/uznemsana/studiju-rezultatu-atzisana>).

After the consolidation, RSU LASE will follow the procedures and regulations implemented in RSU except those included in the List of Internal norms and regulations of the reorganized Latvian Academy of Sport Education during the transitional period from 1 July 2024 to 31 May 2026 (SAR Annex 1.4).

1.1.5.

As the consolidation is still in process, a purposeful review and alignment of the various internal frameworks is still ongoing. During on-site meetings with the directors of study programmes and

heads of the study field, it was explained that the alignment of internal regulations has begun but is not yet complete. There is a separate list of internal regulations at RSU LASE that has been established for the transition period and is applicable for the academic year 2024/2025 (SAR Annex: 1.4_Anx_Internal_Regulations_RSU_LSPA). However, as far as possible, all RSU internal regulations also apply to the RSU LASE. This was a statement from RSU during the on-site visit.

All information related to studies and student assessment is available in the Academic Regulations I (documents available at https://www.rsu.lv/sites/default/files/imce/Documents/academic-regulations_i_01032023.pdf) and in documents that are not available online (SAR Annex 01.3). This also applies to RSU LASE, to the extent possible.

Assessment criteria and independent work tasks to receive an assessment at the end of the course are included in each study course description. They are in accordance with the study course objective, the achievable result, and the ECTS amount. An important aspect is the possibility of receiving feedback on the performance, as well as the respect for the academic freedom of lecturers in the implementation of the study courses, at the same time providing learning outcomes. Assessments are available in the RSU e-learning environment, and they are reviewed by taking into consideration the results of the course evaluation survey. Special attention is paid to the quality of the content of the study course and its relevance to student needs, which is regularly monitored within the framework of the study field. Methodical Guidelines for Research Papers are also available to students (https://www.rsu.lv/sites/default/files/imce/Dokumentu/Nolikumi/regulations_writing_defence_qualification_paper.pdf).

SAR (p. 32) notes that the assessment methodology should be explained at the beginning of each study course, however, conversations with students during the site visit revealed to experts that this is not always done. It is important to note that RSU LASE study courses are not yet fully aligned with the RSU requirements.

1.1.6.

During the consolidation process, RSU and LASE have merged their academic integrity policies. The SAR (section 2.1.6) provides a detailed description of the principles of academic integrity to prevent plagiarism, fabrication, forgery, and other academic misconduct. The main emphasis of The Integrated Academic Integrity Policy is on plagiarism and self-plagiarism, the use of unauthorised aids, and misrepresentation and misuse of academic resources. RSU has implemented the Unified Computerised Plagiarism Control System of Latvian higher education and has purchased a license for the content originality checking tool Turnitin, which has been used since 2015. One of the aspects that ensures the quality of the study process is the integration of Turnitin into the RSU e-learning environment to check not only final but also study papers and interim examinations.

It is important to note that often a relatively high (above 20%) similarity with other sources does not mean that the submitted work is plagiarized, but rather indicates the student's inability to analyse, interpret, and give argumentation. To create a common understanding of academic integrity, teachers and support staff are regularly provided with training by the RSU Information Technology Department and the Centre for Educational Growth. The most significant changes to the RSU LASE Academic Integrity Policy are also clearly defined - introduction to the Turnitin system, harmonisation of policies and procedures, and regular training of the academic staff.

In the meeting with RSU staff and students at various levels during the site visit, the experts were convinced that the academic integrity principles work in the daily study process. In turn, RSU LASE's students and academic staff have information, but not yet such extensive experience, which is understandable, since the consolidation process has just begun and is still ongoing.

Both SAR and meetings with StF management, academic staff, and students during the on-site visit indicated that the principles of academic integrity and mechanisms for their observance are

systematically and structurally included in the university's internal culture. This is evidenced by carefully and precisely developed documents, e.g., the normative acts:

a) Rīga Stradiņš University Academical Regulations I (approved at RSU Senate meeting of 23 November 2021, Minutes No 2-1/10/2021),

b) RSU Academic Integrity Policy (https://www.rsu.lv/sites/default/files/imce/Documents/academic_integrity_policy_21022023_senata_eng.pdf),

c) "Methodological guidelines for references and list of sources and references used in a paper" (https://www.rsu.lv/sites/default/files/imce/Dokumenti/Biblioteka/Methodological_Guidelines_for_Citing_References_and_Compiling_Bibliography.pdf),

d) "Regulations of the Internal Procedure of Studies of Rīga Stradiņš University" (approved by the RSU Senate on 21 April 2020, Minutes No.2-1/3/2020) and others (see SAR, Section 2.1.6).

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

The study field "Education and Pedagogy" and the study programmes included are consistent with the strategic development plans of the HEI, which aim to improve the quality of studies, and research processes and implement the integration of LASE into the RSU system. The goals of the study field are aimed at preparing qualified specialists for educational and pedagogical environments and emphasize the development of competencies necessary for inclusive education and support of professional supervision.

There is a mutual interconnection between the three study programmes: "Sports and Education Specialist", "Health, Physical Activities, and Safety" and "Supervision". The cooperation of the first and second-cycle study programmes would be valuable, with master's students advising bachelor's students. However, this practice has not yet been included in the course descriptions due to the absence of master's students.

The strengths of the SWOT analysis of the study field are the need for professional programmes for the Latvian economy, stable employer cooperation, extensive infrastructure, and qualified academic staff. The StF Development Plan (2024–2027) addresses weaknesses, threats, and opportunities, such as increasing research capacity and improving support systems. Despite the SWOT analysis highlighting the negative impact of the consolidation process, RSU has a clear vision for integration. However, the Development Plan does not address such important issues as student dropout, high study load, and limited administrative capacity.

The management structure of the study field is effective and in line with RSU's quality policy. Greater involvement of employers in the development of the study programmes is needed, as it is currently limited mostly to providing internships.

The consolidation process between RSU and RSU LASE is still ongoing, with internal regulations being reviewed and harmonised. While RSU regulations apply to RSU LASE to the extent possible, RSU LASE has its own set of transitional regulations (2024/2025). A clear and logical student admission system has been established, ensuring open and equal competition. Information on studies and assessments is available in the RSU Academical Regulations I, and assessments are aligned with course objectives and ECTS credit points. Equal treatment is supported by a unified study field Recognition Committee, including a student representative. Currently, RSU LASE courses are not yet fully aligned with RSU requirements - this is intended to be completed during the consolidation process.

RSU and RSU LASE have combined academic integrity policies, focusing on preventing plagiarism and other violations. Turnitin is used as a tool to check the originality of student work. Regular training on academic integrity is provided, and the principles of academic integrity are integrated into the university culture, supported by detailed documents and policies.

Strengths:

- 1) The study field “Education and Pedagogy” aligns with RSU strategic plans to improve the quality of studies and research and ensure a successful integration of RSU LASE into the RSU system.
- 2) There is a strong focus on preparing specialists for educational and pedagogical environments, emphasizing competencies for inclusive education and professional supervision.
- 3) There are interconnections between the three study programmes included in the StF, which provide the opportunity to continue studies in the first and second-cycle programmes.
- 4) There is a well-elaborated policy of academic integrity to prevent plagiarism and other violations, supported by the Turnitin tool and regular training for the academic staff.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The Study Field Development Plan addresses identified weaknesses, threats, and opportunities, however, there can be noticed some gaps – it does not address important issues regarding the quality of the study process, such as student dropout rates, high teaching load for academic staff, and limited administrative staff capacity.
- 2) Conversations with employers revealed that they are involved in providing internships but not in the content improvement of the study courses and the further development of the study field to ensure linkage with labour market requirements.
- 3) Conversations with students revealed that not always the assessment methodology has been explained at the beginning of each study course.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1.

RSU has an established quality policy, which is publicly available on the website (https://www.rsu.lv/sites/default/files/documents/rsu_quality_policy-2023.docx). The quality policy is implemented by the following principles: quality, partnership, student-centric approach, and research and practice-based education and experience. The quality policy is implemented, based on strategic objectives at both departmental and individual level. On the one hand, the quality policy is translated into activities that are integrated into everyday activities, e.g., assessment of work quality, and, on the other hand, targeted control measures are implemented at different periods throughout the year. An analysis of the fulfilment of the process quality criteria is carried out once a year (SAR, p. 39). The results are reviewed at the management level, where decisions are made regarding future activities. RSU collects data to continuously monitor the quality of the studies to produce data reports and analyses. These reports are available for and accessible at different levels of the HEI, by study programme directors, heads of study fields, deans and rectorate (SAR, p. 39, Meeting with the HEI management). An annual report is compiled including the key indicators that are aligned with and allow to assess the strategic goals. The key indicators are used for the improvement of the study programmes and the development of action plans. In the SAR (p. 40) a timeline is visualized that presents the different steps and procedures that are included in the internal quality control system and represent the continuous character of the processes for improvement and development at the level of the study field and the study programmes.

RSU uses the PDCA-cycle (SAR, Fig. 8, p. 38) bringing together the needs of students and other stakeholders, quality policy and energy management policy, and operational results, with a central role for leadership. The PLAN-phase includes defining aims, plan personnel, financial and time resources. DO includes the implementation of the study process, research and ensure activities of the university. CHECK refers to the control and implementation of performance supervision measures (e.g., analysis of strategy implementation results, internal audit). ACT includes the initiation of changes to internal laws and regulations, improvement of processes and activities.

During the onsite visit, it was stated that RSU has a well-developed quality assurance system, that contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes (Meeting with the group responsible for the preparation of the SAR and the person responsible for QA management system). The system fosters continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes.

LASE organized its internal quality assurance system in such a way that it ensured excellence and sustainability through continuous improvement and control. The overall supervision in the study field was carried out by the LASE Study Department. The continuous improvement, development and operational efficiency of the study field and the study programmes are ensured by a series of continuous activities, such as, inspecting the requirements of external regulatory standards and normative acts in the field, monitoring changes, and evaluating compliance, developing, implementing and periodically updating internal documents, planning and conducting internal quality control, controlling the processes of development, implementation and evaluation of the study fields and programmes, and so on (SAR, p. 37).

LASE is in the midst of the merging process into RSU that started as of July 1st, 2024. This process includes many review, adaptation and integration processes, e.g., regarding the infrastructure and accommodation. This is also the case for the processes that steer and orientate the quality policy, and at the moment of the on-site visit, this was still an ongoing process (Meeting with the group responsible for the preparation of the SAR and the person responsible for the QA management system). In the context of quality assurance, different steps have been taken to integrate RSU LASE into RSU's established system, ensuring consistency and alignment with quality standards. Key actions include: the implementation of course and programme evaluation questionnaires to support continuous improvement through structured feedback; the migration of study programme plans and course descriptions to maintain academic coherence and standardization; the transfer of student data, including grades ensuring continuity in academic records and performance evaluation; and, the incorporation of the lecturers' research results to strengthen the link between teaching quality and research output. These measures reinforce a unified quality assurance system, promoting transparency, consistency, and data-driven decision-making in the merged institution.

During several meetings (Meeting with the HEI management, Meeting with the directors of all study programmes, Meeting with the group responsible for the preparation of the SAR and the person responsible for QA management system, Meeting with staff members), it was expressed that this process needs careful attention in order to be fully successful. It is relevant to acknowledge that both LASE and RSU (before consolidation) had a different tradition for several decades. RSU has a tradition that originates in medical education, while LASE had a sports and educational orientation. Next to the operational changes and differences in procedures (amongst others with respect to quality assurance), a smooth transition also necessitates a careful approach and mutual respect for differences in organizational culture (Meeting with the group responsible for the preparation of the SAR and the person responsible for the QA management system). The size of both entities is different: LASE was a smaller unit compared to RSU. These contextual differences can explain the differences in level of formalization and specialization between the two entities. In a larger university, like RSU, processes are more formalized and uniform, while the smaller scale of LASE allowed for informal communication and the use of short lines between the different levels of the organisation. The QA process in RSU is to a high extent digitalized and all processes are integrated and systematized (Meeting with the group responsible for the preparation of the SAR and the person responsible for the QA management system).

The level of specialization is also related to the different sizes of the entities. Some of the roles and responsibilities were different, e.g., the role of the study programme director. At LASE many responsibilities were combined within a single position, while at RSU there is a higher level of specialization and segmentation (Meeting with the group responsible for the preparation of the SAR and the person responsible for the QA management system). At RSU responsibilities are more

divided among different persons and across different units. This might have implications for the dominant organizational culture and this type of changes can create uncertainty. Given the announced changes and modifications, a number of people left RSU LASE. An important context factor to better understand the sensitivities is that none of the organizations (nor RSU, nor the former LASE) were a demanding party for the consolidation and integration process. It cannot be expected that after a period of three months, all changes are adapted, and every single aspect of the structural and cultural dimension are fully integrated. Despite all these differences, mutual respect should be present and the realization that both parties can learn from each other. E.g., with regard to pedagogical principles, RSU can learn from the former LASE, while in other areas, e.g., development of e-learning materials, the current RSU LASE staff can learn from RSU (Meeting with the group responsible for the preparation of the SAR and the person responsible for QA management system).

1.2.2.

At RSU, two documents are focusing on the procedures for the development and review of study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms: 'Regulations for Development and Approval of New StP at Riga Stradins University' and 'Updating and Development of Study Courses, Study Programmes, Study Fields'. Relevant bodies in charge of these procedures are the Centre for Educational Growth and the Vice-Rector for Studies. The director of the study programme is responsible for the supervision over the implementation of the StP, by evaluating the study process, learning outcomes, analysing the results of student surveys, changes to trends in the labour market and current events in the sector and world. At the level of the Faculty, the Study Programme Quality and Development Manager is responsible to oversee the quality and content of the study programmes, monitoring the quality of the StP and analysis of the quality indicators. On a higher level in the organisation, several administrative units are at stake with regard to this area the Centre for Educational Growth, the Academic Affairs Department, the Human Resources Department and the Quality Assurance and Internal Audit Department (SAR, p. 42). There is a procedure to annually review and revise the StP that results in an annual report, prepared by programme director and the members of the Quality Council of the study field. The annual report includes an analysis of significant development indicators, the achievement results, a development plan and an implementation plan for recommendations from expert evaluation procedures. Relevant indicators and information sources are (changes in) student enrolment figures, student success rates, evaluations of study courses, survey results at course and programme level, feedback from employers, and feedback from lecturers.

Before the consolidation, at LASE two documents were focusing on the procedures for the development and review of study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms: 'Regulations on Development and Approval of Study Programmes' and 'Procedure for Development, Update and Use of Study Course Descriptions at the LASE'. The Study Field Councils were the responsible body for the development and the implementation of study programmes (and the Study Council and the Senate at the higher levels). Different stakeholders contributed to the development, annual evaluation and improvement of the study programmes. These included students, alumni, employers, and external experts (SAR, p. 40). Different methods and instruments were used to collect information and feedback: surveys, labour market research (e.g., when introducing new programmes), discussions. Next to the already mentioned groups, the lecturers and study programme directors also provided feedback during the annual review process of the programmes and courses. At the level of the study programmes, the study programme director was responsible to evaluate the study process, the study results, the results of the student surveys, changes in the labour market and developments in the field and society. An example of a relevant change is when new professional standards are approved (which was the case for trainers (2022) and teachers (2020). In response, the study programmes were adjusted to integrate these new expectations.

During the meeting with the students and the graduates, it was confirmed that student surveys are used to collect their opinions. RSU has a tradition to use feedback from relevant stakeholders in order to evaluate and improve their study programmes, e.g., from students, graduates and employers. During the meetings, with the students and graduates, concrete examples were given the kind of feedback that was given in the past, e.g., regarding the placement of students in contexts with SEN-children, the amount of paperwork, the clarity of homework instruction, the organisation of assessment, the availability of e-learning material. During the meeting with the employers, examples of feedback included expectations e.g., the type of skills that are required when entering the labor market and the impact of current trends in the labor market.

During the meeting with the lecturers, it was confirmed that they receive feedback from the students, which is helpful in order to improve their study course material or teaching methods. It's an interesting practice that feedback from students about the course is included in the course description the year afterwards.

1.2.3.

At RSU, there is a procedure for the submission of student complaints and suggestions, as described in the SAR (p. 44-46). This was also confirmed during the on-site visit during the meeting with members of the group responsible for the preparation of the SAR and the person responsible for quality assurance.

At RSU, this procedure is described in the document 'Management of Complaints, Appeals, Non-Conformities and Proposals'. There are clear procedures on how the follow-up is taking place, who is at stake for what, and what needs to happen when. Conflicts of interests are considered, e.g., persons involved in the evaluation of specific state examinations, cannot be involved in the Appeals Commission. In case that the Appeal Commission Chair is involved, the director of RSU LASE appoints another chair.

At RSU, students can submit their complaints to the Student Services, Student Union, and Quality Assurance and Internal Audit Department.

During the site visit, experts received examples of (typical) complaints and appeals, e.g., about the content, volume and assessment of the study courses (Meeting with the study field management and with members of the group responsible for the preparation of the SAR).

Figure 10 (SAR, p. 46) shows an overview of the number of appeals, complaints, and proposals registered at RSU from 2018 to 2023.

It is agreed that as from July 1st, 2024, LASE implements the procedure for submission of student complaints and proposals in accordance with the RSU internal regulations.

1.2.4.

RSU has developed a centralized system for the collection and analysis of key data. At different levels of the organisation (at the level of the university, study field, programme level, faculty and academic structural level and study course level), there are clear responsibilities for the data analysis and interpretation (SAR, p. 49-50, Meeting with members of the group responsible for the preparation of the SAR and the person responsible for QA management system). Some of the data are collected on a monthly basis, e.g., student numbers, student status, type of tuition financing, drop-out information. Next to these administrative data collection, educational process data are collected as well, e.g., the use of the e-learning environment. This 'machinery' leads to an enormous amount of data that is collected systematically, allowing for thorough analyses and data-informed decision making at different levels of the organisation. The mechanisms are effective because they can be used to inform decision makers in an objective way to improve the study field. Some examples: analyze reasons for drop-out to identify possible gaps in demand for and supply of higher education, analyze course descriptions to regularly update the literature and other sources in the study course description, analysis of the number and qualifications of the teaching staff to assess

the compliance with regulatory requirements of the programme, analyses of the lecturers' work to plan staff development, completion of e-studies (SAR, p. 48-49, Meeting with members of the group responsible for the preparation of the SAR and the person responsible for QA management system). There are clear mechanisms for obtaining student feedback by means of electronic student surveys that are distributed twice per academic year. The results of the questionnaires are available for the lecturers, heads of departments and programme directors. Each course leader is responsible to get acquainted with the results and to provide students feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the course and the planned improvements (if any). The course leader submits the feedback to the RSU portal, and this is automatically published on MyRSU, the student portal and on the e-study course. In this way it becomes available for the current students but also for the next year students. Next to the evaluation at course level, a study programme evaluation questionnaire is distributed to students of the last year of the study to provide feedback at study programme level. The results are also automatically processed and published on the RSU academic portal. This information helps to inform directors of the study programme, heads of study fields and the dean (Meeting with the HEI management, Meeting with the Directors of all study programmes).

There are also mechanisms for obtaining and providing feedback from and to employers. There is a separate entry on the RSU Website 'For Employers' that includes amongst others a questionnaire for this particular group to provide feedback. Graduates are required to fill in their employer before graduation which keeps the database up to date. By means of this information employers are invited twice a year to provide feedback. These data are used by the RSU Career Center in view of recommendations based on the analysis of the statistics. The Council of Deans and the Study Programme Directors are informed about the outcomes from the employers survey.

LASE used to have mechanisms to collect study field data before consolidation with RSU, which are described in the SAR (p. 46-47). Data were collected and analyzed in view of improvement of the implementation of the study programmes and the organisation of the study process, based on recommendations from students, graduates, and employers.

Given the transition phase, an impressive number of actions were already taken to integrate RSU LASE into the existing RSU system. Some examples:

- Migration of study programme plans and course descriptions;
- Admission of students (allowing for similar analyses as for RSU Students);
- Transfer of student data to the RSU system (also grades);
- Staff contracts;
- Course and programme evaluation questionnaires;
- Research results of lecturers.

This is a massive effort with many wings and angles with a complexity that can hardly be overestimated. A major advantage of this integration process is that in the (near) future, new data from RSU LASE (which is now a structural unit within RSU) will be collected, analysed and reported in the same way as for the RSU study programmes (Meeting with members of the group responsible for the preparation of the SAR and the person responsible for QA management system).

To have a clear view on trends before and after the transition of LASE into RSU, it is worthwhile to consider the migration of historical data as far as possible to get a good view on the consequences of the transition for all stakeholders involved.

The expert committee appreciates the efficiency of the system, also due to the automatization of different mechanisms to collect and analyse data and to compile reports.

1.2.5.

The information with regard to the professional master's programme study 'Supervision' can be found on the RSU website section that focuses on this StP.

The website provides information about the StP, the degree and qualification offered, credit points,

accreditation term, language(s) of the study programme, study location, study duration, study places and tuition fee, information about the head of the programme, and teaching staff, as well as contact information.

The RSU LASE website contains information of the study programmes on the website section on the StP 'Sports and Education Work Specialists' and 'Health, Physical Activity and Security' for the corresponding short-cycle professional higher education study programme and professional bachelor's study programme respectively. This information is only available in Latvian. Once the RSU LASE and RSU websites are aligned, the information will be available in Latvian and English, in the same format as the other RSU study programmes (SAR, p. 51).

The information that can be found on the respective websites corresponds with the information of the official registers (VIIS and E-platform).

Before the transition of LASE to RSU, LASE had its separate marketing communication policy, but now this is integrated in RSU's marketing communication policy. RSU works on solutions for communication with young students on social media. StP brochures are updated with the augmented reality app Overly (SAR, p. 51).

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

RSU has implemented a quality policy based on the PDCA cycle, setting strategic objectives at both departmental and individual levels. Process quality criteria are reviewed annually, and key indicators are compiled in a report to assess and improve study programmes and action plans. During the onsite visit, it was demonstrated that RSU's quality assurance system supports the study field's goals and learning outcomes.

Previously, LASE had an internal quality assurance system ensuring excellence and sustainability through continuous improvement. As LASE transforms to RSU LASE, integrating quality assurance requires careful attention due to differences in structure, specialization, and culture. RSU's highly digitalized QA system is an advantage, but RSU LASE staff must adapt. Mutual learning and respect are essential.

Because of the merger, it is important to migrate historical data as extensively as possible to ensure a clear view of trends before and after the transition of LASE into RSU LASE. This will provide valuable insights into the consequences of the transition for all stakeholders involved.

RSU engages various stakeholders—students, alumni, employers, and external experts—in programme development, evaluation, and improvement. Study programme directors assess the study process, results, student feedback, and labour market trends. Clear procedures exist for student complaints and follow-ups.

RSU systematically collects and analyses statistical data to enhance study programmes and organization. As part of the transition, RSU LASE's data systems are being integrated, with study plans, admissions, student data, and staff contracts already migrated. Future data collection and reporting will align with RSU's system, ensuring objective decision-making. A notable practice is incorporating student feedback into course descriptions the following year. Due to the very high level of digitalization and automatization, this process works very efficiently and effectively.

The RSU and RSU LASE websites provide detailed programme information, including degrees, qualifications, credit points, accreditation terms, and languages.

Strengths:

- 1) RSU has a well-established quality assurance system that is digitalized and automatized to a high extent, leading to an efficient and effective system.
- 2) The PDCA-cycle is used and a year-base timeline with activities is followed.
- 3) Different stakeholders contribute to the development and improvement of the study programmes.
- 4) Statistical data are analyzed and reported, e.g. in an annual report with key indicators. These are

the basis of decision-making, supporting reliability and objectivity.

Weaknesses:

1) A weakness in the current transition phase is the existing uncertainty and lack of clarity regarding quality assurance processes among RSU LASE staff. This ambiguity needs to be addressed, as it may impact the effectiveness of quality assurance efforts. Additionally, there is a need for improved communication and bi-directional channels to reduce these uncertainties and ensure a smooth transition.

Assessment of the requirement [1]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Following the recent merger of LASE into RSU LASE, the transition process has been accompanied by uncertainty and a lack of clarity regarding quality assurance processes among RSU LASE staff, which must be further addressed. Additionally, there is a need to enhance communication and establish effective bidirectional channels to mitigate these uncertainties and facilitate a seamless transition. At the moment, these elements can impact the continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study programmes at RSU LASE.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

RSU has an established policy and procedures for quality assuring based on internal regulatory documents. They describe the mechanisms and procedures that are rolled out at the different levels (SAR, p. 16, 25-29).

- 3 1.2 - A mechanism for the development and internal approval of the study programmes of the higher education institution/ college, as well as the supervision of their performance and periodic inspection thereof has been developed.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

RSU has developed a system for internal approval of the study programmes and a system to supervise the periodic and cyclic assessment of the study programmes (SAR, p. 36-40).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The criteria that are used for the evaluation of the students' results as well as the conditions and procedures are developed and published. These can be found in SAR Section 2.1.5 and Annex 17.1 (Compliance of the study programme with the National Education Standard) and paragraph 1.3 of Annex 23 (Compliance of RSU study Programmes with part 1 of the Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)). Each year, compliance assessment is conducted, and the mechanisms are reviewed.

From academic year 2024-2025 onwards, RSU LASE follows the criteria, conditions and procedures for the evaluation of RSU students' achievements.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Internal procedures and mechanisms for ensuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality are described in SAR Sections 2.3.5, 2.3.6., 2.3.7., and in Paragraph 1.5 of Annex 23 (Compliance of RSU Study programmes with Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Areas (ESG)). Each year, compliance assessment is conducted, and the mechanisms are reviewed.

As from the academic year 2024-2025 onwards RSU LASE follows the internal procedures and mechanisms for the qualification and quality assurance of academic staff.

RSU LASE has established internal procedures and mechanisms to ensure the qualification and quality of the staff, and the 'LASE Regulations on Academic Staff Positions' have been approved and implemented. The internal normative acts of RSU LASE ('Regulations on Elections of Academic Staff of the LASE' and 'Regulations of the Council of Professors of the Health and Sports Science Sector of the LASE') remain in force during the transition period till May 31th, 2026 in accordance with the RSU Rector's Decree 1-PB-2/429/2024.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

SAR provides comprehensive information on various aspects of academic performance and institutional effectiveness. SAR section 2.1.5 details student academic achievement, while SAR section 3.1.3 addresses graduate employment for each study programme. Graduate feedback mechanisms, including student satisfaction with study programmes, are covered in SAR sections 1.2 and 2.2.4. The efficiency of academic staff performance is documented in SAR sections 2.3.7, 2.4.4, and 3.4 for each study programme, as well as in SAR Annexes 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, and 24.7. Additionally, information on study resources and their costs is available in SAR sections 2.3.1 to 2.3.4 and 2.3.8, along with SAR Annexes 23.1 to 23.3. Key performance indicators are outlined in SAR sections 1.1 to 1.3 and on the RSU website.

Despite these structured efforts, relevant historical data from LASE was still being integrated into the RSU system during the site visit. Ensuring this integration is essential for maintaining continuity in academic and institutional performance assessments, as well as for enhancing the effectiveness of quality assurance processes.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

RSU ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of study fields through the implementation of its quality assurance system, as outlined in SAR sections 1.3, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2.2, and SAR Annex 23.1. This system ensures compliance with Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), providing a structured framework for maintaining academic excellence.

However, following the recent merger of LASE into RSU LASE, the transition process has been accompanied by uncertainty and a lack of clarity regarding quality assurance processes among RSU LASE staff, which must be addressed. To ensure a smooth transition and the effective implementation of RSU's established quality assurance standards, there is a need to enhance

communication and establish bidirectional channels that reduce these uncertainties and support staff adaptation to the integrated system.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1.

RSU has established a system for determining and redistributing the financial support required for the implementation of the study field, which is financially supported through a diverse range of sources, including state budget grants, tuition fees, funding for scientific activities from both state and EU structural funds, international projects, contract work revenues, and income from other services such as student accommodations and facility rentals (SAR, p. 52).

The annual RSU budget planning is systematic and involves a collaborative process where department heads and study programme directors discuss necessary provisions. Departments submit budget applications, which are evaluated by various stakeholders, including deans and the Rectorate, before being coordinated by the Senate and approved by the Council. The allocated budget for each structural unit is determined by factors such as student numbers, pedagogical work, infrastructure investments, revenue trends, scientific activities, and the financial results of each study programme (SAR, p. 53). In expert opinion, the collaborative budget planning process ensures resources are strategically allocated based on a range of performance indicators, fostering a data-driven approach to financial management.

RSU has implemented a comprehensive system for funding scientific activities through various internal funding programmes, which are allocated during the annual budget planning process. These internal programmes and incentive schemes include the RSU internal grant system (~ 400 thousand EUR per year), grants for doctoral and post-doctoral students, joint grants with other universities and co-financing for international networks. External funding is also secured through participation in EU programmes like "Horizon 2020" and "Horizon Europe," as well as national initiatives such as the National Research Programme and the Fundamental and Applied Research Programme. Furthermore, RSU collaborates with the private sector, including commissioned research and commercialization projects, to supplement its research funding (SAR, p. 53). Experts agree that actively seeking external funding and engaging with the private sector further enhances RSU's research capacity.

The consolidation process has been partly financed by the Ministry of Education and Science (Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No. 903 "On the reorganisation of LASE"). LASE has entered the consolidation with its budget, while RSU has contributed its financial resources, administrative and digital infrastructure, and educational centre for lecturers, among other things, at the total rate of 22% (Meeting with the HEI management). Currently, RSU is engaged in financial planning for each study programme, focusing on determining the requisite student enrollment numbers and evaluating the financial measures required to ensure study programme sustainability. All expenditure is accounted for, and a thorough cost analysis and estimation aligned with RSU standards will be feasible once a minimum of 12 months of financial data has been accumulated (SAR, p. 53; Meeting with the HEI management). While RSU is actively collecting data and planning finances for the study field and each study programme, their long-term financial sustainability depends on developing a comprehensive strategic plan with clear objectives, timelines and minimum enrollment thresholds for each study programme.

1.3.2.

RSU has established a comprehensive infrastructure and material support system for the study field "Education and Pedagogy", ensuring their accessibility for both students and staff. A system is in place for the improvement and procurement of necessary resources, including technical,

methodological, and informational facilities. The RSU IT Service Centre provides essential IT support and can be reached from 7:30 to 20:00 on weekdays and from 9.00 to 16.00 on Saturdays (SAR, p. 54).

The institution features 193 lecture rooms equipped with high-resolution multimedia projectors, ten computer rooms with over 200 workstations, and specialized facilities such as hybrid classrooms and recording rooms. The IT infrastructure spans 23 buildings, providing 3,142 network ports and 323 wireless access points. Communication platforms like MS Teams and Zoom facilitated over 74,900 lectures in 2022, while the Panopto system houses over 31,000 video recordings. The Booker room reservation system is integrated with the Timetabler lecture and lesson planning system (SAR, pp. 54-55, Tour of the RSU facilities). Experts agree that these communication platforms, along with the Panopto video system, enhance the accessibility of lectures and facilitate the remote-learning process.

RSU LASE facilities at Brīvības Gatve are suitable for conducting study process, featuring computers, multimedia resources, and internet access, along with specialized auditoriums and sports facilities. In expert opinion, research units, such as Sports Science Research Laboratory and Health Care in Sports Research Centre, are well-equipped (SAR, p. 56, Tour of RSU LASE facilities) and support the implementation of the study programmes as well as scientific research.

During the consolidation process, an audit of RSU LASE's Brīvības Gatve buildings and material-technical base revealed a mostly satisfactory condition but identified critical improvements needed, such as installing fire alarm systems, improving ventilation, and setting up evacuation routes and lighting (SAR, p. 56). The dormitory building has been closed, and athletic rooms and the stadium are temporarily unavailable in winter, with premises rented elsewhere. A concrete plan for addressing deteriorated premises is pending as such planning requires data, which is in the process of acquiring (Meeting with members of the group responsible for the preparation of SAR and the person responsible for QA management system). Meanwhile, electronic resources such as advanced multimedia equipment are gradually installed in RSU LASE auditoriums (Tour of RSU LASE facilities). Although the RSU LASE facility improvement plan awaits completion of data acquisition, proactively addressing identified deficiencies, such as installing fire alarm systems, improving ventilation, and securing temporary dormitory premises, remains crucial to ensuring a safe and accessible learning environment for students and staff.

1.3.3.

The RSU Library is an accredited institution of national significance, with a diverse collection of 536,200 physical items, including 248,200 books. Additionally, it provides access to approximately 534,000 subscribed electronic resources, primarily e-books, through over 30 databases that are accessible remotely by students and faculty (SAR, p. 58). For the study field "Education and Pedagogy", the library offers five e-book databases—EBSCO, ProQuest, Elsevier, McGraw-Hill, and SAGE Research Methods—alongside 11 full-text multidisciplinary journal databases (SAR, p. 59). The relevance and accessibility of these resources were highlighted during the site visit (Presentation of learning platform). Students can find information on databases on the RSU Student Portal MyRSU (SAR, p. 60).

The RSU Library is located in the main RSU building at Dzirciema street 16, Riga, and is also accessible to people with disabilities. The library includes 290 reading spaces and 33 computer stations, and is equipped with wireless internet. Facilities also include reading rooms and a computer equipped with text-to-speech functionality to assist individuals with learning difficulties (SAR, p. 58, Tour of the RSU facilities). Self-return facilities are also available in the main RSU building, as well as Interlibrary Loan and the International Interlibrary Loan (SAR, p. 58). In expert opinion, the RSU Library holds a substantial collection of physical and electronic resources accessible to both students and faculty, including electronic databases suitable for the "Education and Pedagogy" study field.

The RSU Library has established a systematic approach for expanding its collection based, among other factors, on collaboration with faculty members and analysis of user statistics, satisfaction levels and costs. However, although user statistics are collected for RSU student interactions with databases, such statistics are not available for RSU LASE students prior to the consolidation process. Data collection for RSU LASE students is now underway (Presentation of learning platform). Students and staff can electronically suggest additions through the help.rsu.lv system (SAR, p. 60), which also serves as a communication channel for various inquiries (SAR, p. 58). Funding for information resources is steadily increasing, reaching 44 EUR per library user in 2023, with approximately 85% allocated to electronic subscribed resources in 2023 (SAR, p. 58). In expert opinion, the systematic approach to the development of library collection, incorporating faculty input and ongoing accumulation of user data, ensures the relevance and quality of the RSU Library's resources.

From July 1, 2024 all RSU Library resources, including subscription databases, are available to the students of RSU LASE (Meeting with members of the group responsible for the preparation of SAR), thus enhancing RSU LASE students' access to information resources (SAR, p. 59). RSU LASE students can order books from the RSU library; however, their physical delivery to the RSU LASE premises is not provided (Tour of the RSU facilities). Additionally, similar self-return facilities are not available in the premises of RSU LASE (Tour of the RSU LASE facilities).

The working hours of the RSU Library are from 8:30 to 19:00 on working days and from 10:00 to 17:00 on Saturdays (<https://www.rsu.lv/biblioteka>; Tour of the RSU facilities). Meanwhile, the RSU LASE Library has more limited accessibility with working hours from 9:30 to 17:00 on working days only (Tour of the RSU LASE facilities), which reduces the opportunities for students to visit the library at their own convenience. The accessibility of the library becomes especially important when students need to scan required mandatory literature texts for a specific study course, which are only available as physical resources within the library. RSU need to consider digitizing the required chapters or sections of texts rather than entire books and ensure that all mandatory readings are available digitally to enhance their accessibility. Thus, while RSU LASE students now have access to the RSU Library resources, disparities in library hours and physical resource accessibility warrant attention to ensure equal access and convenience for all students.

1.3.4.

RSU LASE employs a range of IT solutions to facilitate the study process, enhancing accessibility and engagement for students and faculty. The primary tools are: Information System, MS Teams and course management system (CMS) - Moodle, which is transitioning to the RSU e-learning platform. RSU LASE CMS facilitates study material provision, assignment submission, course assessments, and communication between students and lecturers (SAR, p. 61), thus providing opportunities for remote learning. Similarly, the RSU e-learning platform offers functionalities such as uploading materials, conducting tests, tracking attendance, accessing past course resources, and posting grades (SAR, p. 62). The RSU e-learning platform has also integrated Turnitin system for plagiarism detection within submitted assignments and Safe Exam Browser for secure online examinations (SAR, p. 63).

According to SAR (p. 61), communication between students and faculty primarily occurred via LASE provided email addresses, however, during the site visit it was confirmed that RSU LASE students have been migrated to MyRSU student portal and given RSU email addresses (Tour of the RSU facilities, Meeting with students). MyRSU portal includes access to grades, schedules, e-learning materials, Office 365 access and feedback surveys (SAR, p. 62), consolidating essential academic information and communication.

Remote learning is supported by the RSU e-learning platform alongside Panopto for video content creation and Zoom for virtual classes (SAR, pp. 62-63). Recorded lectures that are created through Panopto and on-site video-recording systems are made available in the e-learning platform (Tour of the RSU facilities), which provides a more flexible learning experience. The incorporation of Panopto, Turnitin, Zoom and Safe Exam Browser into the RSU e-learning platform demonstrates to experts a

commitment to flexible learning, academic integrity and secure online examinations.

RSU has also established an e-resource repository (DSpace) that stores digital research including theses and academic publications in an open-access format since 2020 (SAR, pp. 63-64). Additionally, a study programme mapping system enhances study programme management by cataloging descriptions, learning outcomes, study plans, and regulatory compliance with standards such as the Occupational Standard (SAR, p. 64).

RSU has implemented a comprehensive array of IT solutions to support effective on-site and remote study processes, which became available to RSU LASE as of July 1, 2024. To facilitate the transition, RSU regularly organizes training sessions for RSU LASE staff on the optimal use of these IT systems and tools (Tour of the RSU facilities). However, due to the relatively recent consolidation, some RSU LASE lecturers have not yet been fully familiarized with the available IT tools (Tour of the RSU LASE facilities). Additionally, some lecturers continue to share study materials via email instead of the e-learning platform (Meeting with students), therefore there is a need to motivate staff to fully utilize these resources.

1.3.5.

RSU carries out the process of academic staff recruitment and employment by following the national legal requirements and the internally approved “Regulations on Academic Elections at RSU”. These regulations define the recruitment procedure, establish candidate requirements, and ensure process transparency through mandatory public announcements of vacant academic positions in the Official gazette of the Republic of Latvia “Latvijas Vēstnesis” and on RSU webpage (SAR, p. 66, Annex 1.3. “University internal regulations that are not available online outside RSU systems”, Regulations on Academic Elections at RSU available online - https://www.rsu.lv/sites/default/files/imce/Dokumenti/Nolikumi/Nolikums_par_akademiskajam_velesanam_RSU.pdf).

RSU has also implemented an annual scientific research performance assessment with a corresponding yearly bonus, and a biennial performance evaluation that considers multiple professional factors and provides a monthly bonus. These motivational schemes are available also to RSU LASE academic staff (Meeting with members of the group responsible for the preparation of Self-Assessment report and the person responsible for QA management system) and serve as mechanisms to promote continuous professional development among the existing academic staff.

RSU LASE academic staff recruitment and employment procedures are governed by a set of internal procedures and regulations that prescribe a merit-based selection process. These regulations mandate a holistic evaluation of candidates, assessing their academic credentials, pedagogical performance, and supplementary documents demonstrating suitability for the position. All academic vacancies are publicly announced in “Latvijas Vēstnesis” and other media platforms (SAR, pp. 65-66), thereby promoting open competition, procedural integrity, transparency and merit-based selection.

As a result of the consolidation process, RSU LASE will implement transition to RSU’s employment procedures by May 31, 2026, marking the conclusion of the transition period. Until then RSU LASE will maintain its existing internal employment-related regulations (SAR, p. 66, Annex 1.4. “Internal norms and regulations of the reorganised Latvian Academy of Sport Education during the transition period”). In expert opinion, RSU LASE’s transition to RSU’s employment procedures by May 31, 2026, will ensure consistent standards across the institution.

1.3.6.

RSU Centre for Educational Growth (CEG) plays a crucial role in developing the pedagogical and digital competencies of the academic staff both at RSU and RSU LASE. CEG offers over 40 training sessions across various thematic blocks such as defining learning outcomes, development of the pedagogical design of the study course, assessment in the digital environment, use of the e-learning

environment and other pedagogical and digital areas. Lecturers in the “Education and Pedagogy” study programme have access to CEG’s education offers, which are updated each semester. Since March 2020 the training sessions are conducted both remotely and in-person, each semester featuring more than ten different thematic courses totaling over 140 academic hours. Participation in CEG training sessions is integrated into the academic staff performance evaluation mechanism, thus incentivizing continuous professional development (SAR, pp. 70-71, Tour of RSU LASE facilities). RSU supports formal lifelong learning also through material assistance for further education, including tuition fee discounts and access to courses at RSU Open University. Additionally, RSU has implemented projects to enhance English language skills among its staff, with successful attainment of B2 level leading to increased remuneration for work conducted in English (Annex 23.1. “Compliance with ESG standards”, p. 14; Tour of RSU facilities). In expert opinion, the diverse training sessions and their integration into performance evaluation mechanisms contribute to the improvement of pedagogical and digital skills of the academic staff.

In 2011, RSU implemented a Performance Management System, which was later replaced by RSU Grow portal in 2022. This new platform facilitates performance evaluation cycles, discussions between managers and employees on results, career development, and qualification plans. Based on these evaluations, managers plan targeted support activities such as courses and conferences to enhance specific skills and knowledge. Additionally, RSU conducts biennial employee satisfaction and engagement surveys to gather feedback and subsequently implement their recommendations (Annex 23.1. “Compliance with ESG standards”, p. 14).

RSU LASE has implemented a professional development system for academic staff, addressing their qualification enhancement needs. RSU LASE follows the Cabinet of Ministers’ Regulation No. 569, requiring academic staff to complete 160 professional development hours, including at least 60 contact hours during their appointment term. Professional development opportunities include international mobility, conference and seminar participation (SAR, p. 67).

Through European Social Fund (ESF) support, RSU LASE has enhanced faculty professional development by facilitating foreign language training, leadership skill enhancement, and professional internships up to 200 hours. RSU LASE actively promotes research activities by providing financial support for conference participation, international journal publications, monograph production, and seminar organisation for employers and the public, while also encouraging faculty members’ involvement in educational and sports-related professional organizations (SAR, p. 68; Meeting with the RSU LASE academic staff). These comprehensive initiatives demonstrate to experts a commitment to continuous improvement and the professional growth of academic staff in RSU.

1.3.7.

86 teaching staff members are involved in the implementation of the study field “Education and Pedagogy”, of whom 57 are elected, 10 are Acting professors and 56 hold Doctoral degrees (SAR Annex 24.7. “Analysis of the composition of the teaching staff”).

An example of the added value of consolidation is the extensive administrative structure of RSU, which has been extended to RSU LASE. This integration has reduced the administrative duties and tasks of RSU LASE academic staff, freeing up their time to focus on core responsibilities. However, the transition period has temporarily increased the daily workload for RSU LASE staff as they adapt to the new procedures and digital tools introduced by RSU, requiring significant time for training and learning. Additionally, RSU LASE staff members often combine their responsibilities with the implementation of the study field “Education and Pedagogy” alongside their work on other bachelor, master, and doctoral programmes, further contributing to the workload (Meeting with the RSU LASE academic staff). Although the administrative burden on academic staff has decreased, the transition period has caused a temporary workload increase as staff adjusts to new procedures, systems, and tools. Furthermore, the staff’s involvement in multiple study programmes contributes to an

unsustainable workload, raising concerns about the balance and long-term effects of such workload. According to SAR, RSU conducts ongoing monitoring to ensure balanced faculty workload. Teaching staff involved in implementing the study field plan their pedagogical workload by semester and academic year, with workload reviews conducted as necessary in compliance with applicable laws and regulations (p. 72). However, it would be beneficial to specifically assess and address the increased burden experienced by RSU LASE staff during this transition to ensure a sustainable and balanced workload during and after consolidation.

1.3.8.

RSU provides comprehensive support for students with special needs throughout their academic journey, including assistance in selecting appropriate study programs, enrollment, and ongoing accommodations during their studies, while fostering an inclusive social and physical environment (SAR, p. 75, Tour of the RSU facilities). Since 2012, RSU has provided psycho-emotional support to students, helping them manage adaptation challenges, stress, psychosomatic disorders or illnesses, overcome difficulties in building relationships, and crisis situations, which has led to reduced dropout rates and improved academic performance (SAR, p. 75).

The Career Centre at RSU offers individual consultations, group career counseling, and hosts events addressing labor market trends. Students can access job vacancies through the RSU Career Centre portal and participate in workshops designed to enhance their employability (SAR, p. 75). Regular meetings, guest lectures, and excursions are organized to facilitate interaction between students and employers (SAR, p. 75).

RSU LASE will continue to provide a support system for its students, ensuring both academic and personal development throughout their study process. The support services have included the IT and Technical Support Centre, which addresses technical issues through a centralized help desk; the Study Department, which assists with academic inquiries and feedback; and psychological consultations offered by faculty members, complemented by initiatives from the LASE Student Self-Government that have promoted mental health awareness (SAR, p. 74). RSU LASE organizes courses for sports educators at both national and university levels, working also with those selected by students for internships to enhance their mentoring skills (Meeting with study programme directors). Due to the consolidation, the functions and representation of the LASE Student Self-Government have been reduced to two representatives within RSU Student Union (Tour of the RSU facilities), suggesting that it might be beneficial for the RSU Student Union to continue activities for RSU LASE students that promote their mental health awareness. The SAR indicates that psychological support is offered to students through consultations with psychology lecturers at the academy (p. 74). Additionally, it notes that RSU students, including those at RSU LASE, can access psycho-emotional support (p. 75). However, it remains uncertain whether RSU LASE students are fully aware of these opportunities. Consequently, it is recommended that RSU extend their implemented independent psychological support service for RSU LASE students, ensuring that they are informed about and have convenient access to these resources.

Given that literature in English on sports and pedagogy is more current and comprehensive than literature in Latvian (Tour of the RSU facilities), it is essential for students to possess a strong command of English to engage with this material effectively. There are concerns about the level of RSU LASE students' English language skills and whether this level is compatible with the available and mandatory literature in English (Meeting with students). Therefore, it would be prudent to assess this issue and consider implementing support measures, such as courses to enhance students' English proficiency.

The transition period has also presented additional challenges for RSU LASE students beyond their regular academic routine. The migration of RSU LASE students to the MyRSU student portal and the provision of access to databases and other electronic resources via RSU systems has necessitated a learning and adaptation process. Moreover, the lecture schedules have been variable throughout the

semester, lacking stability and hindering students' ability to plan their time effectively. Furthermore, the increased workload of the teaching staff has impacted their capacity to communicate with students in a timely manner (Meeting with the students).

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

RSU possesses sufficient resources for implementing the study field "Education and Pedagogy", with a well-established system for determining and redistributing financial support. RSU's facilities, IT infrastructure, digital educational tools, library, electronic study materials are comprehensive and in excellent condition and are available to RSU LASE staff and students from July 1, 2024. However, the financial planning for each study programme and the necessary steps to ensure their sustainability is still ongoing, along with a plan for addressing the deteriorated premises of RSU LASE as such planning requires data, which is currently in the process of acquiring.

The recruitment of academic staff at RSU is formally compliant with national regulations and internal procedures, ensuring transparency and merit-based selection. The workload of staff has increased during the consolidation process and should be assessed. RSU supports professional development through various training programs, performance evaluation mechanisms and incentive schemes, yet there is room for enhancing staff motivation to fully utilize the available IT resources and tools.

RSU provides a comprehensive support system for its students, encompassing academic and personal development through services like IT support, academic and career assistance, and psychological consultations. However, there are concerns regarding the English language proficiency of students, as literature in English on sports and pedagogy is more current and comprehensive.

Strengths:

- 1) RSU offers extensive IT support, digital and technical tools, including platforms like MS Teams, Zoom, Panopto, a comprehensive e-learning platform, and recording studios facilitating remote and on-site learning and enhancing study material accessibility for students and staff.
- 2) The RSU Library provides access to a vast collection of physical and electronic resources, including over 30 electronic databases, and RSU ensures a steadily increasing funding for library resources.
- 3) RSU supports research activities through various internal and external funding sources, while also offering up-to-date and topical professional development opportunities for academic staff, including training sessions and performance evaluation mechanisms.
- 4) RSU provides comprehensive support services for students, including assistance for those with special needs, psycho-emotional support, academic and career guidance.

Weaknesses:

- 1) There are concerns about the English language proficiency of the study field's students, which may hinder their ability to engage effectively with English-language literature and resources, which are prevalent in the field of education and sports. Additionally, the Teacher Professional Standard requires a minimum A2 level of proficiency in a foreign language.
- 2) RSU LASE facilities require critical improvements, such as enhancing fire safety and ventilation systems, which poses a challenge for providing a safe learning environment. Additionally, the dormitory closure significantly impacts accessibility for students from distant locations.
- 3) The RSU LASE Library's working hours are from 9:30 to 17:00 on working days only, which reduces the opportunities for students to visit it at their convenience.
- 4) RSU LASE students face limitations in accessing physical library materials directly on their premises, as delivery services from the RSU Library are not provided, which can hinder their ability to fully utilize the available resources.
- 5) There is a need to incentivize or train RSU LASE lecturers in using available IT tools, as a lack of

knowledge or motivation impedes the effective integration of digital resources into the study process.

6) The consolidation has diminished the role of the RSU LASE Student Self-Government within the RSU Student Union, potentially affecting representation and support for RSU LASE students.

7) Financial planning for the study programmes is ongoing, with concrete measures to ensure their sustainability still unknown due to data accumulation.

8) It is unclear whether RSU LASE students are sufficiently informed about the available psychological support services, which may impact their ability to access and benefit from these resources.

9) Students face a challenge when required mandatory literature texts for a specific study course are only available in physical form, as this limits accessibility and can disadvantage those who cannot easily access the library.

10) The transition period has resulted in an increased workload for RSU LASE staff and created challenges for students beyond their regular academic routine. It remains unclear whether these issues have been adequately addressed to maintain a healthy work-life balance for staff and ensure a smooth learning experience for students.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1.

Scientific research is well presented in the SAR, section 2.4, and the document was also confirmed and supplemented by the responsible for the HEI management, study field directors, study programme directors and teaching staff of the University in the site visit interviews. There are some projects and publications carried out by the teaching staff and researchers involved in the study field, including publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus (SAR, Annex 6.4 and 6.5). Research in the fields of Education and Pedagogy is carried out in close cooperation with several research fields, developing scientific and applied research. RSU research has three research platforms: (i) the medical platform, (ii) the public health platform and, (iii) the social sciences platform. Each of these platforms conducts research in several groups of scientific disciplines, in priority science directions for the economy of Latvia and in areas determined by the health policy of Latvia and the European Union.

The priority direction of the University's development is to encourage staff members to develop high-quality scientific projects and outputs. In the interview, the Vice-Rector of RSU for Academic Affairs mentioned that the strategic development plan of the University focuses on International research. The goal of RSU research is not only increasing internationally high-quality scientific results, but incorporating them into the study process of the study field "Education and Pedagogy".

The RSU focuses its efforts on providing quality studies and developing scientific research of good quality, namely creating structures open to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and studies (SAR, p. 76, p. 78), which is very positive. Nevertheless, when analyzing in detail the list of the publications presented by the teaching staff, the most relevant ones are not totally related to "Education and Pedagogy" and linked to the study programmes (SAR, Annexes 6.4.1., 6.5.). There is also a gap on the publications in the most significant and impactful journals in this study field. Moreover, there are some significant differences among academic staff members (including elected academic staff) in their research publications and projects (SAR Annexes 6.4.1., 6.5., 13.2.). Therefore, at this consolidation phase of the RSU and LASE it would be important to define a global strategy to overcome these concerns, namely, to decrease the differences in the scientific outputs among the elected academic staff and to focus the research scope on a more centered "Education and Pedagogy" approach related to the specific study programmes.

1.4.2.

Study courses included in the study programmes are related to the research areas of the teaching staff, especially considering the interdisciplinary focus of the interventions. Teaching staff integrate their research experience and the involvement in specific research projects into their study courses, thus ensuring students acquire continuously up-to-date knowledge and skills (SAR, p. 78). Moreover, RSU presents good facilities, IT systems and some important equipment and support for teachers and students. The Sports Lab is updated and well-equipped to train students and staff and also for research purposes with staff dedicated full time to research assistance. Although it would be important to update some literature in the RSU LASE library, in general, RSU libraries are well equipped with access to databases of scientific publications allowing the development of study courses using the latest research findings, that can be used either by teachers or students.

The integration of research results from academic staff and students in the study programmes of the field "Education and Pedagogy" is carried out using various methods and activities that promote student engagement, knowledge exchange, and the development of practical skills (SAR, p. 78). For example, in the course "Qualitative Research in Sports and Health Education," students evaluate qualitative research problems in their chosen topic in pedagogy, sports, and health education. They also develop a qualitative research plan in their chosen topic, collect data, process the data in groups, analyse and evaluate the results, and draw the conclusions of this research. Another example, in the study programme "Supervision", within the course "Master's Thesis" students collaborate on research project development, discuss industry trends, and present their work at various research stages. These teaching methods can promote student independence, critical thinking essential for research, and the ability to collaborate with peers (SAR, p. 79).

Further, each year, "LASE Scientific and Methodological Article Collections" are published, featuring annual results from master's students' research in the publication "Physical Preparation Process in Master's Theses". These research results are accessible to students and the general public as they are freely available. Moreover, RSU LASE students can participate annually in the RSU LASE Student Scientific Conference and RSU Research Week, where the results of joint scientific activities of academic staff and students are presented.

1.4.3.

In order to promote cooperation and attract funding for the development of priority research areas, RSU takes an active part in various EU and national programmes and initiatives, such as Horizon Europe, COST Actions, ERA-NET, ERDF, and FLAG-ERA. RSU is a member of international research infrastructures (EATRIS, BBMRI, EOSC, SHARE, EIT Health), and participates in important international consortia (CIMBA, BCAC). 130 international research projects were submitted for 2017-2021, 39 of which were funded. These include 13 projects under Horizon 2020 and 9 are ERA-NET projects (SAR, p. 81). The most important projects for the EU Structural Funds are related to infrastructure improvements, improvement of management processes and modernisation of the content of study programmes, strengthening the capacity of academic staff, reducing fragmentation of study programmes and promoting internationalisation of studies. (SAR, p. 81).

In the context of RSU LASE programmes, international collaboration has also been established with some partners: both among universities, through participation in different mobility projects, and by participating in international scientific conferences. To promote international-level cooperation and enhance the international experience of academic staff, collaboration agreements have been signed with foreign universities (SAR, Annex 7).

There are some approaches highlighting international cooperation in the field of scientific research, namely the projects developed under Erasmus+ funding, where both teaching staff and students are involved in these activities (SAR, p. 81). One can underline the experience gained in Erasmus+ projects, whereas the organisation of students' examinations was improved by applying good practice and experience gained in foreign universities (SAR, p. 82).

The main benefits of international cooperation in the study programmes “Health, Physical Activity and Safety” and “Sport and Education Specialist” in the study field “Education and Pedagogy” are the initiation and implementation of various projects that contribute to the improvement of the quality of the study process. For example, The NordPlus project “Schoolyard Affordances for Physical Literate and Active Schoolchildren in Era of Digitalization” (SAPLACED), NPHZ-2021/10040, investigated and made recommendations on opportunities to increase physical activity in everyday school life. The recommendations "Ideas guide for good practices in physical education" are available not only for RSU LASE students in the implementation of the study content, but also for all teachers in Latvia and other project countries (SAR. p. 82).

The lecturers involved in the implementation of the Master study programme “Supervision” have participated in the conferences organised by the Association of National Supervision Organisations in Europe (ANSE), allowing to update the trends in the field of supervision and to establish cooperation with foreign experts.

Although these participations are very positive, RSU should reinforce international cooperation in the field of scientific research more related to the study field of “Education and Pedagogy” and also to the study programmes, namely the Short cycle professional study programme “Sport and Education Specialist” and the First cycle professional bachelor study programme “Health, Physical Activity and Security”. For instance, one should be aware that the main aim of the Erasmus+ calls and other similar initiatives is not to develop research projects, thus a broader strategy must be prepared by the RSU board to integrate the staff members of RSU LASE into the RSU research and internationalization plan.

1.4.4.

RSU has developed effective mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research and applied research. Researchers are supported in their work and international cooperation is possible with the support of RSU. Moreover, an incentive system for researchers and other mechanisms (e.g. RSU Growth Portal, School of Junior Academics) has been set up in relation to publishing and research, aiming to motivate research activities and the development of scientific outputs, which during the assessment visit was positively valued by the RSU board but also by the teaching staff. Several teachers of the study field “Education and Pedagogy” are experts of the Latvian Council of Science (LZP) (SAR, Annex 6.5), which must be also emphasized.

RSU LASE academic staff participate in the preparation of publications and conferences both in Latvia and abroad, such as the Baltic International Sports Science Conference and the European Educational Research Conference. They also take part in the International Scientific Conferences organised by RSU, by Riga Technical University, and the University of Latvia, among others. Additionally, they actively participate in other international scientific conferences outside Latvia. RSU LASE lecturers are also involved in scientific research resulting in some publications in citation databases (Web of Science, Scopus), which is very positive.

Nevertheless, as above mentioned, there are still some gaps to fill as there are significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with Education and Pedagogy, and with the study programmes (e.g., Medical Sciences, Epidemiology, Pharmacology). Furthermore, the strategy of the RSU should position the direction of the RSU/LASE to the standards that they are willing to achieve, namely publications as original research in the most prestigious journals in the field of the study programmes.

1.4.5.

RSU students participate in scientific research based on their knowledge, abilities, competency, and experience. Hence, RSU has developed several strategies and procedures to promote the involvement of the students in scientific activities. In general, RSU students can conduct research as

follows: (SAR, pp. 85-86): (i) participate in vertically integrated projects, (ii) applying for Student Research and Innovation Grants, (iii) Enhance research skills through RSU Business Incubator B-Spac PINK and INK programs, (iv) participating in student research interest groups in various areas, (v) applying for funding from the Students Union for research support to participate in conferences or seminars within or outside the country, as well as to publish a scientific article in an internationally cited journal, (vi) participating in RSU international scientific conference "Research Week", (vii) presenting own research paper at the RSU International Student Conference. Although these measures are very positive, the incorporation of LASE into RSU will provide an opportunity for students to participate more actively in RSU research activities, including developing new research interest groups related to the study field of Education and Pedagogy and the study programmes, which at this moment is missing.

Additionally, attention is given to integrating research into the teaching process and content, as well as encouraging the involvement of students as research assistants in research projects, making it part of their learning process and thus developing research skills and motivation to pursue an academic career (SAR, pp. 84-85). The main research topics of the RSU LASE students are related to the study of the impact of physical activity on students' emotional well-being and academic achievement, the role of the sports teacher in promoting healthy lifestyle habits among students, and the study of the possibilities of promoting students' motivation in sports and health lessons. The research also includes an analysis of innovative approaches to sport education and an exploration of the development of pupils' socio-emotional competences in sport education (SAR, p. 85). This approach and these projects are very positive and can be highlighted as good practices that can be followed in other domains under this study field.

Students conduct research activities in collaboration with employers. Representatives of employers participate in the study programme quality board, where research topics significant to specific professional environments are updated at the beginning of each academic year. One example of good practice is a research project for the State Revenue Service (SRS) on the evaluation of supervision in a state institution that has been implemented under this context (SAR, p. 87). Moreover, the most active RSU students are involved in the organisation of the RSU International Student Conference, which is an important event to help integrate students more deeply into the scientific culture.

Hence, experts' positively evaluate the mechanisms developed by RSU to promote the involvement of the students in scientific and applied research.

1.4.6.

Innovative solutions are applied in the study field, though this application is yet a minor focus in the global development of the "Education and Pedagogy" study field at RSU. Major contributions are related to learning and teaching innovations, with several activities of much importance. One can highlight the use of the new e-learning platform, methodological and technological innovations, with updated facilities, including IT systems and some important equipment and support for teachers and students (SAR, p. 87; and observed during the assessment visit at the RSU). To foster a culture of learning and teaching innovation, RSU not only organises training and best practice exchange sessions, but has also developed learning and teaching innovation guidelines, which have been validated among lecturers and received feedback to help understanding the full innovation cycle and start working on modernising their courses (SAR, p. 88).

Although these approaches are very important and positive, there are some steps to be applied to highlight this innovation content, namely in deep cooperation with the scientific research activities.

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

In conclusion, the study field "Education and Pedagogy" at RSU aligns well with the university's goals

and the broader scientific landscape, showcasing significant research and interdisciplinary collaboration. The integration of research into the educational process is noticed, fostering a dynamic learning environment where students are actively engaged in scientific activities and encouraged to participate in international projects and conferences. However, there are several gaps in the alignment of research outputs directly with the "Education and Pedagogy" field and disparities among academic staff in research productivity. To address these challenges, RSU should develop a cohesive strategy to enhance research focus on this field, and promote publications in high-impact journals. Strengthening international research cooperation and innovation initiatives will further enhance the quality and impact of RSU contributions to Education and Pedagogy related to these study programmes.

Strengths:

- 1) RSU focuses its efforts on providing quality studies and developing scientific research of good quality, namely creating structures open to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and studies.
- 2) RSU has developed effective mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research and applied research. Researchers are supported in their work and international cooperation is possible with the support of RSU.
- 3) RSU has developed several strategies and procedures to promote the involvement of the students in scientific activities.

Weaknesses:

- 1) When analyzing in detail the list of the publications presented by the teaching staff, the most relevant ones are not directly related to "Education and Pedagogy" and there is a gap on the publications in the most significant and impactful journals in this study field associated with the study programmes.
- 2) There are some significant differences among academic staff members (including elected academic staff) in their research publications and projects, and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with Education and Pedagogy.
- 3) The international cooperation in the field of scientific research is not fully developed.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Although there are some good projects and publications carried out by the teaching staff and researchers involved in the study field, including publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, the most relevant ones are not directly related to "Education and Pedagogy" and the study programmes, and there is a gap on the publications in the most significant and impactful journals in this study field. Moreover, there are some significant differences among academic staff members (including elected academic staff) in their output research publications and projects.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1.

According to the SAR (section 2.5.1), in the context of the StF "Education and Pedagogy," the collaboration with various institutions has created partnerships with Latvian universities, employers' organizations, municipalities, professional associations, ministries, NGOs, and scientific institutes. The collaboration networks contribute to the aims and learning outcomes of the study programmes. They correspond with the aims to maintain societal involvement, foster professional dialogue, and respond to labour market changes.

There are certain sets of criteria for selecting cooperation partners, like reputation, relevance to the aims and objectives of the study field, addressing issues related to the employment opportunities of graduates and mutual benefits for all sides involved (SAR, p. 91).

There are different goals for cooperation with various types of organizations - for example, with employers, the main emphasis is on placement agreements for students and the involvement of employer representatives in the Quality Council of the Study Field and State final examination commissions. In turn, cooperation with other universities and professional organizations is implemented in the context of research projects and publications, and by participating in conferences and meetings to engage students in the professional environment. The established cooperation networks are based on common goals and involvement in various types of activities, like working groups, conferences, methodological events, and guest lectures (SAR, p. 91-92).

Each of the study programmes, according to their specifics, has its circle of cooperation partners. The main cooperation partners of the second cycle study programme "Supervision" are a) the State Revenue Service in the implementation of master's thesis research, b) partner universities (e.g. RISEBA) in the organization of student scientific conferences, and c) RISEBA, European Christian Academy and the Latvian Supervisors' Association in the development of a professional standard (SAR, p. 91). Since there are currently no students in the study programme, it is possible to assess the experience of cooperation implemented so far, and not to speculate about the future formation of cooperation networks in the context of this study programme.

The cooperation partners for short-cycle study programme "Sport and Education Specialist" and first cycle study programme "Health, Physical Activity and Security" (SAR, p. 92) involve companies, state and non-governmental organisations, professional associations, and universities, such as Riga Technical University, the University of Latvia, Daugavpils University, and former Liepāja University (RTU Liepāja Academy). Very relevant for the StF is the European Social Fund Plus project "Induction Year Support for Young Teachers after Teacher Qualification" 4.2.2.7/1/23/I/001) implemented by the project lead partner University of Latvia is involved in the preparation of young specialists and the provision of induction year support for graduates of the study programme and project partners, including RSU LASE (SAR, p. 92).

The SAR states that the list of concluded agreements for the provision of internship placements is given in Annex 9 (SAR, p. 92), but it is given in Annex 9.1 in the document collection. Instead, the list of internship placements (130 LASE's base schools) is provided in Annex 7 (Cooperation Agreements).

1.5.2.

In the context of the StF "Education and Pedagogy," the collaboration networks with foreign institutions are developed (SAR, Section 2.5.2) involving universities, governmental and non-governmental organizations, professional associations, and scientific institutes. Like cooperation with Latvian institutions, also in the international space the collaboration networks contribute to the aims and learning outcomes of the study programmes and there are the same sets of criteria for selecting cooperation partners, like reputation, relevance to the aims and objectives of the study field, and mutual benefits for all sides involved. Regarding the contribution to the aims and learning outcomes of the study programmes, the goal of international cooperation emphasizes the achievement of study field learning outcomes through international cooperation, like participation in international research projects and creative initiatives, as well as organizing guest lectures and

inviting guest speakers.

RSU International Department has developed an extensive network of European partner institutions, organizing Erasmus+ International Week, attending international association events, as well as actively using ERASMUS+ mobility grants. There are over 200 bilateral agreements for student and staff mobility, ensuring coordinated study programs and recognition of courses. RSU has also gained recognition in the international context: a) is ranked among the top 1000 universities globally by QS World University Rankings 2022, b) regularly receives the highest "A" rating in the European Union's U-Multirank system, c) is praised by World Bank experts for student involvement and strategic planning and recognized by the European Association of Students, and d) is recognized by the National Education and Development Agency for successful implementation of ERASMUS programmes.

Some examples of RSU LASE's include involvement in the ERASMUS+ Sport Programme in the "European Physical Activity and Sport Monitoring System" project, coordinated by the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth. A significant example of strengthening cooperation between Nordic and Baltic countries is participation in projects like "Schoolyard Affordances for Physically Literate and Active Schoolchildren in the Era of Digitalization".

Mechanisms for attracting international cooperation partners have also been developed, including professional networking events and participation in events organized by associations, for example, the European Association of Erasmus Coordinators.

SAR offers additional information on cooperation agreements concluded with other institutions in Annex 7, where there are listed 19 cooperation agreements concluded with RSU and 31 - concluded with LASE. Analysing the specifics of existing cooperation partners, it can be seen that LASE (prior the consolidation with RSU) has established a network of international partners that implement the study programmes in the field of "Education and Pedagogy" with emphasis on sports education, while the specialization of RSU cooperation partners is more related to the field of medicine and healthcare.

1.5.3.

The SAR (Section 2.5.3) provides an overview of a developed system and procedures for international mobility opportunities for academic staff and students. The system includes two levels of mobility - short-term mobilities within the ERASMUS+ programmes and long-term mobilities by including various mechanisms to attract international students and academic staff.

Several strategies are listed for attracting and retaining international students and academic staff, creating a diverse and internationally recognized academic environment. Among these strategies, there are international partnerships and cooperation networks, international study programmes and courses, active recruitment in education fairs, and online campaigns. Several support systems are available for students and academic staff, such as mentor and support programmes, as well as scholarships and grants.

RSU has provided some examples of relevant practice in RSU LASE - every year lecturers and students participate in the international summer school "OSRESS" that promotes active lifestyles, attended by students and lecturers from multiple countries. The number of incoming foreign lecturers participating in mobility is increasing every year in the relevant study programs (see SAR Annexes "LASE Foreign Lecturers and Staff", Annex 08.1_Anx_Stat_data_intl_stud_staff.pdf).

Also, the RSU has provided data about incoming foreign lecturers in the Professional Master's study programme "Supervision" (see SAR Annex 08.1_Anx_Stat_data_intl_stud_staff.pdf). However, according to the data available in the Annex, they have used their mobility only to participate in the International Scientific and Practical Conference "Health and Personality Development: an Interdisciplinary Approach".

Despite the opportunities offered, the availability of information on the RSU and RSU LASE websites, and the support for both teachers and students, Annex 8.2 states that "In the short cycle study

programme “Sport and Education Specialist”, in the professional bachelor study programme “Health, Physical Activity, and Security” and the professional master study programme “Supervision” of the study field “Education and Pedagogy” there were no incoming or outgoing student mobilities during the evaluation period”. Thus, the created system for the mobility of students and academic staff in this study field cannot be evaluated as sufficient and effective. Although SAR cites reasons for not using mobility opportunities, such as student employment, which limits opportunities for internship mobility for several months, opportunities for short-term mobility are now also offered.

The situation in the first half of 2024 has improved at RSU LASE in terms of academic staff mobility – it has increased by 43% in the reporting period after the COVID-19 pandemic, as already in the first half of 2024 more than 20 lecturers had gone on short-term mobility (SAR, p. 95).

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

The SAR (Section 2.5.3) outlines a comprehensive system for international mobility opportunities for academic staff and students, including short-term mobility within the ERASMUS+ programmes and long-term mobility. Various strategies are employed to attract and retain international students and staff, such as international partnerships, study programmes in English, active recruitment through education fairs and online campaigns, and support systems like mentor programmes and scholarships. These efforts aim to create a diverse and internationally recognized academic environment.

Despite these strategies and the availability of information and support, the system's effectiveness is questioned due to the lack of incoming or outgoing student mobilities in relevant study programmes during the evaluation period. However, there has been a significant improvement in academic staff mobility at RSU LASE, with a 43% increase in short-term mobility post-COVID-19. This suggests that while the system for staff mobility is effective, further efforts are needed to enhance student mobility within the study field.

Strengths:

- 1) Cooperation networks in Latvia are aimed at professional competence enhancement of the academic staff and improvement of study quality according to the specifics and aims regarding the study field and the relevant study programmes.
- 2) RSU LASE has established a) a wide network of partners in the national context for the provision and implementation of internship placements and b) a network in the international context with the cooperation partners selected because of the relevant study field with an emphasis on sports education.
- 3) The system and procedures for the participation in both outgoing and incoming mobility as well as the attraction of foreign teaching staff and students within the study field are generally well thought out and systemically structured.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Although the RSU International Department has developed an extensive network of European partner institutions, organizing Erasmus+ International Week, attending international association events, as well as actively using ERASMUS+ mobility grants, there is a lack of international cooperation networks developed in the relevant study field.
- 2) The mobility of academic staff and students is essential to ensure the quality of studies. However, there is not enough volume of incoming and outgoing mobility in the relevant study field and its study programmes.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Cooperation networks in Latvia are aimed at professional competence enhancement of the academic staff and improvement of study quality according to the specifics and aims regarding the study field and the relevant study programmes. Although the RSU International Department has developed an extensive network of European partner institutions and is actively using ERASMUS+ mobility grants, there is a lack of international cooperation networks developed in the relevant study field "Education and Pedagogy". Also, there is an insufficient volume of incoming and outgoing mobility in the study field and its study programmes that would give additional benefits to ensure the quality of studies.

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

Analysis

1.6.1.

The study field "Education and Pedagogy" received accreditation on May 24th, 2013, according to the decisions by the Study Accreditation Commission. In SAR section 2.6.1. it is written that at that time in this study field there was only one first-level professional higher education study programme "Health and Sports Specialist", and the study programmes "Health, physical activity and Security" and "Supervision" were added to this study field later.

Recommendations for the study field "Education and Pedagogy" have been listed based on the content. The subdivisions of the recommendations are quality, resources, sustainability and collaboration/overlap.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE QUALITY OF THE STUDY FIELD:

1. In order to continue applying the learning outcomes (MR) approach to the development, implementation and quality assurance of study programmes (SP):

- Specifying and formulating SP MR;
- Linking course units MR to SP MR;
- Linking course units MR to MR achievement scoring criteria;
- The content and succession of study courses have been revised in order to promote the performance of the professional activities of alumni.
- By linking the course unit content to the course unit MR, or otherwise;
- Further expand the use of interactive learning and learning methods (e.g. problem solving, etc.) by increasing the focus on learning;
- Use evidence based assessment of learning achievements;
- Continue to strengthen the link between theoretical and practical preparation, leading to a better performance of the future professional activities of alumni.

Information provided in SAR Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) and the meetings during the site visit, it can be concluded that RSU has performed the suggested mapping (Annexes 18.1). Annex 11 also indicates that RSU LASE has developed new study courses, as well as during the site visit, that a wide range of interactive methods have been implemented in the study process of RSU LASE, such as, for example, group works, work in pairs, co-operative training, problem solution tasks, discussions, dialogues, role plays and pedagogical situation games. However, it is not described in Annex 11 how evidence based assessment is used to assess the learning achievements, therefore the recommendation is considered as partially completed.

2. It is better to link the aim of the study programme to the results of the study programme, as well

as to link the results of the programme separately with the learning outcomes of different course units in order to avoid overlap (through critical harmonisation).

Based on the information provided in Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) and the meetings during the site visit, it can be concluded that RSU has performed the suggested mapping (Annexes 18.1) to better link aims of the study programme with the results of the study programme and the results of the study programme separately link with the learning outcomes of different course units to avoid overlap. It has to be noted that Annexes 18.1., especially for the study programmes “Health and Sports specialist” and “Health, physical activity and Security” are not user friendly and should be improved in the future. Nevertheless, the mapping has been performed and the recommendation is considered as completed.

3. Avoid, as far as possible, the fragmentation of course units in programmes, making them as holistic as possible and targeting the future professional functions of alumni.

New study programmes “Health and Sports specialist” and “Health, physical activity and Security” have been developed in accordance with the labour market needs, eliminating the fragmentation of study course units in the study programmes and making sure that the graduates are equipped with knowledge and skills to perform their professional functions. This recommendation is considered as completed.

4. Review the possibilities, ways and forms of making better use of the experience of all stakeholders (students, alumni, employers, professional associations, sports federations, etc.) in the development, implementation and quality assurance of study programmes for training sports specialists. The involvement of different stakeholders in the work of SP committees may be considered.

As it is explained in Annex 11 in great detail how students, alumni, employers, professional associations, sport federations and local municipalities have been involved in creating the study programme, this recommendation is considered as completed.

5. Start teaching practice in schools earlier, consider using a successive model of teacher education. It is indicated in Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan): “In the study programme “Health, physical activity and Security” the placement is started in the 1st year of studies, the sub programme “teacher of Sports, Health and State Defence training” implements the successive model of teacher education”. This recommendation is considered as completed.

6. The theoretical training of students does not always address practical issues in the labour market, so the practical and theoretical training of students should be better linked to the future professional functions of alumni in the labour market.

Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) indicates: “New content of study programmes has been developed in accordance with updated occupational standards, employer recommendations and mapping of study courses has been performed in accordance with updated occupational standards.” This recommendation is considered as completed.

7. Further develop foreign language skills among students and staff.

While in Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) there are mentioned ways how student and staff English skills could be enhanced, based on the site visit and conversations held during the meetings, it does not seem that neither opportunities to go on ERASMUS+ mobility nor mandatory/elective English language classes so far have been sufficient to reach an optimal level of English on average for students in RSU LASE and staff (both RSU LASE and RSU). Annex 11 also indicates “Some 70% of teaching staff involved in StF have a level of English proficiency equivalent to B2”, however in Annex 6.1. only for ~36% of the teaching staff the indicated level of English proficiency is B2 and higher. This recommendation is considered as not completed.

8. E-learning opportunities should be better developed for students.

Because of the consolidation, RSU LASE learning environment now is transferred to a contemporary RSU learning environment which provides a multitude of e-learning possibilities for separate study courses or individual learning outcomes. This recommendation is considered as completed.

9. Transparency and publicity of student achievement assessment criteria should be better ensured by students; it is particularly important to avoid linking assessments with the attendance of student lectures or seminars, etc.

While Annex 11 states: "Students have the assessment criteria available in the e-learning environment, as well as on the website in the section "study course Catalogue"", it is crucial that the assessment criteria is not only available to students, but also clearly presented and explained to students at the beginning of the study course, providing an opportunity for students to ask questions. Based on the meetings with students it was not clear if all teaching staff follow this procedure carefully. This recommendation is considered as partially completed.

10. The internal quality assurance system must be based on learning outcomes and comply with the ESG requirements for quality assurance in a higher education institution

ESG requirements for quality assurance systems have been introduced (Annex 23.1). This recommendation could be considered as completed.

11. Some study programmes would require some lecturers to change their attitudes to needs and requirements.

Please see "Recommendations on quality of the study field" subdivision 6. This recommendation is considered as completed.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE RESOURCES:

1. Look for opportunities to raise more EU funds to improve the academy's infrastructure, rebuild its learning and learning spaces, and intellectual and material resources for e-learning development.

As it is indicated in Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan), multiple EU funds have been attracted to increase the energy efficiency in RSU LASE building; to modernise RSU LASE infrastructure; to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at RSU LASE; to have innovative research-based international inter university joint doctoral study programme "Sports Science" and more, nevertheless observations made during the site visit still makes it seem that there is a lot more to be done in order to have a learner friendly university building. This recommendation could be considered as partially completed.

2. Search for opportunities to deploy the library on the ground floor.

In Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan), it is indicated that moving the library to the ground floor has been evaluated, but not followed up upon. Annex 11 also says: "Provides access to the Library for people with disabilities via elevator", however, RSU need to consider implementing solutions for making LASE building (all floors on both blocks of the building) more accessible for people with disabilities, focusing on adapting the environment accessible for people with disabilities to move around on their own (e.g. portable ramps, plans for building/ reconstructing the lifts), instead of suggesting solutions that would create even more barriers. While the elevator might help to get to the library for people with disabilities or elderly people, access to the library and classrooms above the ground floor should also be provided for people in wheelchairs. This recommendation is considered as not completed.

3. Increase the number of places for students in the library to international standards (about one place per 3 students).

According to the information in the SAR, the total number of students in RSU LASE were 1255. While RSU LASE library is renovated, it certainly does not provide work places for ~418 students, hence this recommendation is considered as not completed.

4. The theoretical training of students should be better focused on the profession of the future.

Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) indicates: "New content of study programmes has been developed in accordance with updated occupational standards, employer recommendations and mapping of study courses has been performed in accordance with updated occupational standards." This recommendation is considered as completed.

5. Enable students to use the e-learning system to achieve the learning outcomes set by individual

course units and study programmes.

Because of the consolidation, RSU LASE learning environment now is transferred to a contemporary RSU learning environment which provides a multitude of e-learning possibilities for separate study courses or individual learning outcomes. This recommendation is considered as completed.

6. Provide study programmes with modern facilities that meet changing labour market needs.

While RSU LASE now has access to RSU research and teaching facilities, the majority of classes are still being led in the central building of RSU LASE which most certainly is very far from the labour market needs. This recommendation is considered as not completed.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON SUSTAINABILITY:

1. Seek opportunities to develop new study programmes (in line with the mission of the academy) that meet changing labour market needs.

Two new study programmes "Sports and Education specialist" and "Health, physical activity and Security" have been developed according to the mission of the higher education institution and the labour market needs. The recommendation is considered as completed.

2. Consider developing and offering courses units in English to promote the internal and external internationalisation of the academy.

While in the Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) it is indicated that there are study courses available in English, after the site visit at RSU LASE and the conversations held during the meetings it is not clear if majority of the teaching staff would be comfortable to actually deliver study courses in English as developing a study course does not necessarily mean that the teaching staff member could actually deliver it at an optimal or high quality level. This recommendation is considered as partially completed.

3. Look for opportunities to further increase the number of visiting professors from abroad.

While in the Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) it is indicated that ERASMUS Charter "ERASMUS CHARTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION 2021-2027" has approved mobility projects providing the opportunity for visiting professors, none of the study programmes in study field "Education and Pedagogy" in their Annex 19 (Study plan) mention a single visiting professor. This recommendation is considered as not completed.

4. Consider developing a strategy to introduce an assessment of students' previous learning achievements, thereby increasing the sustainability of study programmes.

"Regulations on crediting learning outcomes and resuming of studies at subsequent study stages" came into force in RSU on June 27th, 2022. "Regulation on the LASE recognition of competences acquired in Professional experience or learning outcomes achieved in previous Education" came into force on 12th of January, 2023. This recommendation is considered as completed.

5. Further develop foreign language skills among students and staff.

Please see Recommendations for the study field subdivision "Recommendations on study field quality" recommendation 7. This recommendation is considered as not completed.

6. Further develop the e-learning strategy and its implementation for use in individual programmes.

In Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) RSU clearly describes how the teaching staff of the programme "Supervision" has learned how to incorporate/better incorporate E-studies into their work. In turn, RSU LASE in Annex 11 as a result for this recommendation has mentioned RSU LASE Senate approval of documents which will no longer be in force after the consolidation process. However, based on the conversations held in the meetings during the site visit, RSU LASE now has a lot of opportunities to improve their e-learning strategy and implementation by using RSU systems (e.g., E-studies) and learning from good practice. This recommendation is considered as partially completed because the process of RSU LASE staff and students regularly utilizing E-studies has already started, but is not completed yet.

7. Increase the number of outgoing and especially incoming students in order to promote the internal and external internationalisation of academy studies.

While in the Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan), the number of outgoing and incoming mobility students (apart from COVID-19 pandemic times) have been presented as gradually increasing, Annex 8.2. (Student Mobility) indicates that no outgoing or incoming students have been happening during the period of evaluation. This recommendation is considered as not completed.

8. Better use data on labour market needs in relation to future sports teachers, coaches and managers in Latvia to improve the quality of study programmes.

Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) provides a clear and detailed answer with specific examples on how this recommendation has been taken into account. This recommendation could be considered as completed.

9. Involve all types of stakeholders in the work of study programme committees in order to improve quality, specifying in particular the main learning outcomes of different study programmes.

Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) indicates that one of the ways employers have been included is their involvement in the creation process of study programmes in this study field. What is more, while the existing study field Quality Board (Annex 4.3.) did not have any employer representatives in it, the project for the new study field Quality Board has incorporated employer representatives. It might be beneficial to include even more employers who do not have any previous connection to the university whatsoever, as they still might be a bit biased and see things and processes in a way that they were taught while working/studying there. This recommendation could be considered as partially completed as the new study field Quality Board is not active yet.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON COLLABORATION AND OVERLAP:

1. Extend the range of types and methods of cooperation with employers and alumni, in particular with sports federations and associated professional associations, by developing and ensuring the quality of study programmes, avoiding the “closed loop” effect in cooperation with stakeholders.

In Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) a multitude of ways of employment and alumni involvement are mentioned: programme management, study field management, the implementation of placements, the conduct of final examinations, the development of occupational standards. To have a more in-depth understanding on how this process happens, it would be useful to develop an employer involvement strategy (if one is not developed already) to define the principles of how employers are invited to participate in the study field Quality Board, what are the criteria (if any) for inviting specifically those employers, how long it is considered to be beneficial to have the same employers involved in different ways and what is the vision of employer involvement in the future. While there are improvements possible in this area, this recommendation is considered as completed because employers are indeed involved in the collaboration with RSU.

2. Involve external experts from other universities as well as other external stakeholders in the quality assurance of internal study programmes (testing, defending semester papers, as well as assessing practical skills acquired during practical training, etc.).

As indicated in Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan), external experts are involved in the quality assurance in final study examinations and defence of the placement, nevertheless the suggestion goes beyond, recommending also to involve external experts in assessing practical skills and defending semester papers. The recommendation could be considered as partially completed.

3. Further develop foreign language skills among students and staff.

Please see Recommendations for the study field subdivision “Recommendations on sustainability” recommendation 5. As well, in Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) it says that “Under ESF projects, LASE/ESF project No 8.2.2.0/18/I/006, LASE/ESF project No 8.2.2.0/18/A/023 significantly improved staff foreign language skills, however it is not clear what is meant by significant improvement. This recommendation is considered partially completed.

4. Develop a plan to increase the internal and external internationalisation of the university and gradually implement it.

Please see Recommendations for the study field subdivision "Recommendations on sustainability" recommendations 2.(partially completed), 3.(not completed) and 7.(completed), hence this recommendation is considered as partially completed.

5. Training units in English should be developed and provided in order to be attended by international students; staff foreign language skills should be significantly improved.

Please see Recommendations for the study field subdivision "Recommendations on study field quality" recommendation 7. This recommendation is considered as partially completed.

6. Seek opportunities to involve more experts from other universities, as well as stakeholders, in the quality assurance of internal study programmes.

Please see Recommendations for the study field subdivision "Recommendations on collaboration/overlap" subdivision 2. This recommendation is considered as partially completed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STUDY PROGRAMME "SPORTS AND EDUCATION SPECIALIST":

Study programme "Sports and Education specialist" was licensed on October 4th, 2023. 1 short-term and 4 long-term recommendations were presented in the process of licensing.

1. Short-term recommendation. Sports equipment required for the study programme must be regularly updated.

As it is stated in the Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan), the renewal of the sports equipment is still in process, hence the recommendation could only be considered partially completed.

2. Long-term recommendation. In order to ensure the internationalisation of the study process, search for new forms to involve international scientific conferences, Erasmus + mobility, etc. not only teaching staff but also students.

In Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) an improved agenda of LASE International summer School OSRESS has been presented. The summer School indeed comprises universities from a multitude of European countries (Lithuania, Spain, Italy, Poland and Bulgaria), thus ensuring both students and staff with one opportunity to gain an international experience in an academic setting. While the organisation of the summer school is not considered as sufficient to consider this recommendation as completed. Meetings with the RSU representatives during the site visit assured that the consolidation process will bring a lot more international opportunities for RSU LASE staff and students. The recommendation is considered as partially completed.

3. Long-term recommendation. Attract foreign visiting lecturers - professors as well as foreign sports professionals who, in cooperation with local academic staff, could broaden students' horizons and implement in practice the principle of internationalisation of the study process.

In Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) it is stated "in the second half of the academic year 2024/2025 it is planned to attract foreign visiting lecturers as well as foreign sports professionals in the implementation of the study programme." In Annex 19 (Study plan) all indicated teaching staff for study programme "Sports and Education specialist" are locals. Therefore, without a clear plan being presented on which foreign lecturers, professors or sports professionals are planned to be invited for how long and in which study courses, this recommendation is considered as not completed.

4. Long-term recommendation. LASE, it would be necessary to find a higher education partner that could enable them to continue their studies directly in higher education level 1 and preferably in another higher education institution, in case the LASE study direction is not accredited.

As stated in Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan), a higher education institution partner has been found. Students willing to continue their studies in level 1 can do it in Daugavpils University. The partnership agreement between LASE and Daugavpils University has been signed on 25th of July, 2023 and attached as Annex 24.1. (Agreement on the continuation of education). The recommendation is considered as completed.

5. Long-term recommendation. By 31 December 2024, move to the European Credit points transfer

and accumulation system (ECTS) in the version and use of the credit points term (Paragraph 93 of the transitional provisions of the Law on Higher Education Institutions).

Based on the conversations held at the meetings with the study field management during the site visit at LASE, the transfer from Credit Points (CP) to the European Credit points transfer and accumulation system (ECTS) is not fully completed yet. The recommendation is considered as partially completed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STUDY PROGRAMME “HEALTH, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SECURITY”:

Study programme “Health, physical activity and Security” was licensed on December 14th, 2022. 3 short-term and 4 long-term recommendations were presented in the process of licensing.

1. Short-term recommendation. It is necessary to recast the cooperation model with LiepU and clearly define it, as the Law on Higher Education Institutions does not currently provide for the implementation of a joint study programme subprogramme, including the definition of the form of the study programme and the model diploma.

Based on the information available in Annex 11 (Recommendation Implementation Plan) and other information provided in SAR, it is not clear whether after the consolidation process of RSU and LASE LiepU is still even involved in the study programme “Health, physical activity and security” at all, therefore it is impossible to evaluate if cooperation model with LiepU has been recast or not. At the moment there is an impression that this collaboration has been stopped. Hence it is impossible to evaluate, if the recommendation is completed, partially completed or not completed as it seems dismissed to begin with.

2. Short-term recommendation. Review the content of health-related courses to avoid possible overlaps in other courses.

According to Annex 19 (Study plan) and Annex 20.1. (Study Course descriptions) content of the health-related courses do not seem to overlap for neither of the the study programme’s “Health, physical activity and Security” sub programmes (“Sports and Health teacher” and “Teacher of Health, Sports and National Defence training”), therefore the recommendation is considered as completed.

3. Short-term recommendation. Evaluate the possibility to indicate in the study course descriptions and curriculum which joint study courses will be implemented with LASE or LiepU teaching staff and how LiepU student mobility for face-to-face classes in LASE will be ensured (Outdoor activity course block, use of a sports Scientific laboratory).

While in Annex 11 (Recommendation implementation plan) it is indicated that the recommendation is implemented, in Annex 20.1. (Study course descriptions) there are no indications of RTU Liepāja academy [LiepU] teaching staff being involved in the teaching of any study courses within the study programme “Health, physical activity and Security”. Likewise, there is also no information about the process of student mobility of RTU Liepāja academy [LiepU]. The recommendation is considered as not completed.

4. Long-term recommendation. Review the working hours of the LASE Library by giving students more access to resources.

While the RSU library works 24/7, during the site visit it was observed that the majority of sport-specific literature is located in the library of LASE. The working hours for RSU LASE library are quite limited: 9:30 am to 3:30 pm and the reading room 9:30 am to 5 pm, which heavily overlaps with the schedule of the classes. During the weekends RSU LASE library is closed as well as it is closed every last Friday of the month (for cleaning). Also the working hours indicated for RSU LASE library differ depending on the language (Latvian or English) in which the website is viewed. The recommendation is considered as not completed.

5. Long-term recommendation. Promote publication of academic staff publications in international peer reviewed publications.

Based on the meetings with RSU and RSU LASE representatives during the site visit, after the

consolidation process, all LASE academic staff will have access to the same mechanisms that are in place in RSU to support their academic staff in writing and submitting publications for international peer-reviewed journals. For example, for junior researchers there are mechanisms such as the RSU Growth Portal and the School of Junior Academics. Apart from that, RSU Human Resources Department has also developed a financial bonus system "Remuneration for scientific performance" In this scientific motivation programme it is explained how much extra money academic staff and also other employees can annually earn based on their scientific activity: publications, patents, supervision of doctoral thesis and conference proceedings. While the scientific motivation programme looks well thought out, the criteria "The article published in a Scopus/Web of Science indexed journal in the field of Medicine and Health Sciences" should be broadened and include fields of Education, Pedagogy and, perhaps, Sports as well. This recommendation is considered as partially completed.

6. Long-term recommendation. "In the content of the Annex 16 Regulation on the recognition of competences acquired in Professional experience or learning outcomes achieved in previous Education, a clear distinction shall be made outside the competence acquired in formal Education, separating them from professional experience

Given the consolidation process of RSU and LASE, this recommendation is not applicable anymore, because RSU LASE will follow RSU inner regulations. RSU regulations on the recognition of competences acquired in Professional experiences or outcomes achieved in previous Education (Apstiprināts 20.03.2012. Senāta sēdē, protokols Nr.1-2/20.03.12.) has clearly distinguished how Professional experiences are recognized and how learning outcomes in Previous Education are recognized, therefore the recommendation could be considered as completed.

7. Long-term recommendation. Ensure that all teaching staff have access to an equivalent system for the basic funding of scientific activity and publication.

Based on the meetings with RSU and RSU LASE representatives during the site visit, after the consolidation process, all RSU LASE teaching staff now have the same opportunities for the funding of scientific activity and publication that RSU teaching staff have. The recommendation is considered as completed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STUDY PROGRAMME "SUPERVISION":

Currently the study programme "Supervision" is in the study field "Education and Pedagogy", which has been accredited on May 24th, 2013, however recommendations for the study programme "Supervision" were written at the time when the study programme was still part of the study field "Health care". 1 short-term and 2 long-term recommendations were presented.

1. Short term recommendation. "If RSU wishes to maintain THE programme PMSP "supervision" as it currently exists, it is more suitable for the study field "Management, Administration and Real Estate Management", supplemented by wider admission requirements, or for the study field "Education and pedagogy" also with wider admission requirements."

Professional master's study programme "Supervision" has been incorporated in the study field "Education and pedagogy"; therefore, the recommendation is considered as completed.

2. Long-term recommendation. "Reduce the number of early students who have left the studies to 1-2."

While RSU has presented a structured plan on how to complete the recommendation, no students in the programme make it impossible to evaluate, if the recommendation is completed/partially completed/not completed.

3. Long-term recommendation. "Based on data, there is relatively low demand for the programme. We recommend promoting the programme and attracting more students...Rise in student numbers by 25."

Currently there are no students in this study programme and the proposed activity plan seems very general and not detailed enough for an issue of this scale. The recommendation is considered as not

completed.

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

In summary it is understandable that the consolidation process has slowed down the implementation or complete implementation of some recommendations. However, it can be also observed that both RSU and LASE have also benefited from the consolidation process and hence have been able to complete the implementation process of some recommendations much quicker (e.g., E-studies for RSU LASE and an increased amount of teaching staff with PhD in education for RSU). For RSU on-going attention should be paid to attracting students in the study programme "Supervision" and to continuing the development of English language knowledge for the teaching staff. For RSU LASE on-going attention should be paid to continue improving infrastructure in and around the university building, to library's working hours and the accessibility, and, last but not least, as well to the development of English language skills for both students and staff.

Strengths:

- 1) Well-developed and modern E-studies platform, ensuring students with a diverse and up to date learning environment and the opportunities of quality E-learning.
- 2) A multitude of opportunities for young researchers, including RSU Growth Portal, the School of Junior Academics, scientific motivation programme and also the accessibility to RSU LASE brand new sports laboratory.
- 3) Mapping of the study courses to better link aims of the study programme with the results of the study programme and to link the results of the study programme with the learning outcomes.

Weaknesses:

- 1) 11 (out of 47) recommendations have not been completed and 15 (out of 47) recommendations have only been partially completed.
- 1) Insufficient English language knowledge skills for both RSU and RSU LASE staff and RSU LASE students.
- 3) Vast majority of RSU LASE infrastructure and equipment is outdated. There is a strong need for the outdated infrastructure to be refurbished and for the outdated equipment to be renewed.
- 4) RSU LASE library and reading room limited working hours (often overlaps with the schedule of the classes, thus limiting opportunities for students to study in the RSU LASE library independently).
- 5) RSU LASE library not being accessible for people using wheelchairs.

Assessment of the requirement [4]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Out of 47 recommendations 19 are considered as completed, 15 as partially completed and 11 as not completed. 1 recommendation has been impossible to evaluate due to no students in the study programme, 1 recommendation has been dismissed.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

- 1) Until the study field is submitted for accreditation, ensure that critical improvements, such as upgrading fire safety equipment, are addressed to ensure a safe environment for the RSU LSAE staff and students.
- 2) Within the next calendar year, encourage faculty members to provide bilingual support where possible, offering key materials in both Latvian and English.
- 3) Within the next calendar year, develop a prioritized renovation plan of RSU LASE facilities based on the audit findings. Establish a regular maintenance and inspection schedule to prevent future issues. Secure temporary dormitory premises to support students from distant locations in continuing their studies.
- 4) Within the next academic year, prioritize the stabilization of lecture schedules to provide students with a predictable and reliable academic routine. Ensure that the assessment methodology is introduced at the beginning of each study course.
- 5) Within the next academic year, address gaps in the current Study Field Development Plan by focusing on critical issues such as student dropout rates, high teaching loads for academic staff, and limited administrative staff capacity.
- 6) Within the next academic year, migrate all available and applicable historical data to ensure a comprehensive analysis of trends before and after the merger of LASE into RSU LASE. This will enable stakeholders to assess the full impact of the transition and make evidence-informed decisions, based on accurate insights.
- 7) Within the next calendar year, implement an optional English course for students and integrate it in the optional part of the study programme. These courses should emphasize the acquisition of sports-related terminology in English, as well as enhance reading comprehension skills, to ensure students can effectively engage with relevant literature and resources in their field.
- 8) Within the next 2-year period, consider expanding the RSU LASE library's operational hours to encompass evenings and weekends. To ensure that these extended hours meet the needs of students effectively, conduct a student survey to identify the most beneficial schedule adjustments that align with their study habits and schedules. Additionally, if the RSU LASE library is primarily utilized by students for accessing mandatory texts that are only available in physical form, consider digitizing these resources. This could involve scanning and converting the required mandatory chapters or sections of texts into electronic formats, such as PDF e-books, to enhance accessibility and convenience for students. By providing digital access to these materials, students can engage with the content at any time, reducing the need for extended library hours solely for scanning and copying purposes.
- 9) Within the next 2-year period, consider implementing self-service facilities within the RSU LASE library, such as automated book borrowing and returning systems. These systems would enable students to access library materials outside of regular operating hours, enhancing flexibility and convenience for students with tight schedules.
- 10) Within the next 2-year period, conduct a thorough assessment of the current workload of teaching staff to identify areas where support is needed. This should include evaluating the impact of the consolidation on their responsibilities. Based on the findings, develop targeted strategies to optimize workload management, such as task redistribution or providing training on efficient resource utilization.

11) Within the next 2-year period, address the following quality assurance aspects for RSU LASE staff: - Ensure comprehensive documentation to support transparency and accessibility of QA procedures. - Clearly communicate about the QA processes and guidelines to ensure consistency and alignment with RSU standards. - Implement targeted training programmes to familiarize staff with RSU's digitalized QA system and best practices. - Strengthen bi-directional communication channels to enhance clarity, address concerns, and promote collaboration.

Long-term recommendations

1) Address the limitations faced by RSU LASE branch students in accessing physical library materials directly on their premises, consider implementing a regular delivery schedule, at least once a week, to transport requested materials from the RSU Library to RSU LASE. This service would be beneficial given their busy schedules and long hours of lectures that may hinder students' ability to physically commute to the RSU Library.

2) Consider developing guidelines for digital literacy among lecturers, which would outline the desired level of proficiency in utilizing the available IT systems and tools. These guidelines could be integrated into faculty evaluation processes to support ongoing professional development. Additionally, consider establishing a peer mentoring programme where lecturers who have already adapted to using the available digital tools can share their expertise with their colleagues.

3) Based on the accumulated data during the transition period, develop a strategic financial plan that outlines clear objectives, strategies, and timelines for ensuring the sustainability of the study programmes. Establish a minimum enrollment threshold for each study programme, defining the required number of students necessary for opening the study programme.

4) Consider establishing an independent psychological support service for students that is separate from the faculty structure. This could involve hiring dedicated counselors or psychologists or extending the services of the RSU resident doctor to include RSU LASE students.

5) Consider gathering feedback from RSU LASE students and faculty to identify the most valued initiatives organized by the LASE former Student Self-Government. Based on this feedback, explore opportunities to extend the support and resources of the RSU Student Council to ensure the continuation of these initiatives.

6) Consolidate the management levels within the study field structure at RSU and RSU LASE to enhance efficiency by considering the inclusion of LASE's former study field manager and the "Education and Pedagogy" Study Quality Council.

7) Engage employers more systematically not only in providing internships but also in the continuous improvement of the study field, content of the study courses and research projects to ensure linkage with labour market requirements.

8) Expand international cooperation networks with institutions and organizations that can enhance the global engagement and collaboration specifically within the study field "Education and Pedagogy". Increase mobility of academic staff and students by implementing strategies to increase incoming and outgoing mobility within the relevant study field and its study programmes.

9) Identify the necessary infrastructure improvements and develop a roadmap on how the improvements of the infrastructure should be made. Include potential sources of government, EU or other publicly available funding. Apply the same principles for the renewal of the equipment.

10) Ensure that the RSU LASE library is accessible by the elevator not only for elderly people and people with disabilities, but also specifically for people using wheelchairs.

11) For academic staff, define a strategy to engage the academic staff to develop English language proficiency, completing an internationally recognized language certificate (IELTS, TOEFL or other). A transition period of 3 to 5 years would be reasonable.

II - "Sport and Education Specialist" ASSESSMENT

II - "Sport and Education Specialist" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

From 1 July 2024, the LASE was merged with RSU and now exists as a structural unit – RSU LASE (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 903 of 13 December 2022 "On the Reorganisation of the Latvian Academy of Sports Education"). Before the merger the short-cycle study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" was implemented by LASE. The study programme is aligned with the study field "Education and Pedagogy" and the strategic goals of the university (see SAR, Table 1, Section 1.1) based on a common understanding of the importance and quality of higher education (SAR, p. 5).

Within the short-cycle study programme "Sports and Education Specialist", students are educated in the following sub-programmes - "Preschool Sports Teacher", "Adapted Physical Activity Specialist in Education", and "Athletic Discipline Coach", which indicates the compliance of this study programme with the study field "Education and Pedagogy", the aim of which is "to prepare qualified specialists for work in the educational and pedagogical environment" (SAR, p. 25).

The short-cycle study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" is unique in the Latvian context since it is the only interdisciplinary short-cycle professional higher education study programme, the graduates of which obtain the qualification "Athletic coach" and "Teacher" with a specialization in preschool education. In overall, the competences set as expected results are both in line with the aim of the study field, as well as national standard for the teacher profession.

2.1.2.

The study programme is a short-cycle professional higher education study programme developed according to the Latvian Qualifications Framework level 5 competencies (available only in Latvian - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba%20classification>) and Vocational Education Law (<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/20244-vocational-education-law>) requirements, as well as also designed following the informative report Proposals for Conceptually New Competence-Based Teacher Education in Latvia prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science. The compliance of the study programme with the Cabinet Regulation No. 305 of 13 June 2023, Regulations regarding the State Standard for Professional higher Education (SAR Annex 17.1) and the sector specific regulatory framework (SAR Annex 17.2) is justified by the description provided in SAR Section 3.1.2. and analysed in detail further in section 2.2.1. of this report.

SAR Section 3.1.2 describes the compliance of the title of the study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" with the objectives, tasks, and content of the sub-programmes. An integrated approach is implemented, covering both sports and education areas, and emphasizing the necessary competencies, participation in the development of the professional field, and understanding of the social context. The title accurately indicates the knowledge and skills required for a sports and education specialist, as well as reflects the relevance of the qualification and title, emphasizing the

role of the specialists being trained in the sports and education fields. Short-cycle professional higher education is part of the first cycle of professional higher education, therefore the duration of the study programme is justified by 2 years in full time studies.

The study outcomes are aligned with the need to obtain higher education, which corresponds to the educational programme group with code 141 "Teacher Education". Two sub-programmes - "Preschool Sports Teacher" and "Adapted Physical Activities Specialist in Education" - provide for the acquisition of a professional qualification as a teacher, including specialization in preschool education. The code of the study programme corresponding to these sub-programmes and the qualification to be obtained is "41141".

The sub-programme "Athletic Discipline Coach" of the study programme aims to obtain the professional qualification of an athletic coach. The code "41813" in the Latvian classification of education applies to this sub-programme, which corresponds to the educational programme group "Sports" (code ISCED 1014), which includes study programmes that acquire sports knowledge, skills, and techniques, including the training of sports coaches. With the accreditation of the study field "Sport", the aforementioned sub-programme will be implemented in the study programme "Health Sport Specialist" of the StF "Sport". This will not have a significant impact on the overall structure of the study programme, as the aim, objectives, and study outcomes of the study programme will be fulfilled (SAR, 170).

Based on the conversation with the head of the study field and the director of the study programme, it is clear that all sub-programmes are essential and complement the overall offer of the study programme, which helps to address the shortage of teachers in the Latvian education system. They contribute to the preparation of sports and education professionals, adapting the content to the roles of teachers and sports coaches. The sub-programmes help to achieve the objectives of the study programme, offering specialisation and developing a wide range of professional competencies that promote the inclusion of children and the development of personality in the educational process. Mapping of the outcomes of the sub-programmes is revealed in SAR Annex 18.1., and the compliance with the standard of the profession of TEACHER and SPORTS COACH in SAR Annex 18.2. Applicants to the study programme are provided with an admission procedure appropriate to the aim of the study programme, taking into account the admission requirements in the Programme (see SAR Annex 1.2.1). The requirements include secondary education with a grade of no lower than 7 points (40%) in the subject area "Sports", as well as grades in centralised examinations in Latvian, mathematics, and a foreign language (15% each, 40% in total). The entrance examination (50%) includes a justification for choosing the profession of teacher and sports coach both in writing and orally (20%). Admission requirements correspond to the name of the study programme, codes, professional qualification to be obtained, as well as the goals, tasks, and study results of the study programme.

2.1.3.

Since the study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" was licensed in 2023, the SAR states that there have been no significant changes to the study programme since licensing (SAR, Section 3.1.1, Table 1).

However, slight improvements have been made in certain areas, namely the aim, objectives, and learning outcomes have been specified during the evaluation procedure with an emphasis on each sub-programme.

The most significant changes to the study programme are because of the centralised switch from the national to the international (ECTS) credit system. As a result, the alignment of all study course credits to the ECTS requirements has been implemented, as set out in the RSU Study Process Development Plan for Social Sciences and Health Studies, approved at the Senate meeting on 13 February and 12 March 2024 (SAR Annex 4.1). The transition to the new credit system is addressed in the guidelines "Transition to the new credit system. Recommendations for study programme

directors and course leaders" (see SAR Annex 28). However, during the on-site meetings with former StF director (LASE) and current StF director, experts got to know that there still are study course descriptions that have to be aligned for transition to ECTS in terms of content.

2.1.4.

The issues regarding the economic and social justification of the study programme were discussed with the RSU management, the study programme director, and the head of the study field, and the main aspects are presented in the SAR (Section 3.1.3).

The substantiation is based on European statistics (SAR, p. 172) showing significant growth in employment in the sports sector including Latvia and the need for qualified sports professionals remains consistently high (SAR, p. 172). The creation and implementation of study programmes, such as the "Athletic Discipline Coach" sub-programme, are essential to prepare professional sports coaches and other specialists. It aligns with EU guidelines, ensuring high-quality education for future specialists. The study programme's development involved collaboration with multiple partners and experts, ensuring it meets labour market demands and supports the overall development of Latvia's education sector. Also, the academic staff of the study programme were convinced that the study programme would enhance the sector's competitiveness and contribute to Latvia's economic and social development by offering opportunities to young specialists to integrate into the labour market. The study programme director works closely with employers and professional organizations to find appropriate internship and employment opportunities. Moreover, during the experts' on-site visit, conversations with employers revealed that they highly value the professional competence of graduates.

The sub-programmes "Adapted Physical Activity Specialist in Education" and "Pre-school Sports Teacher" are socially and economically justified, addressing specialist shortages and promoting sustainability in education. There is an increasing need for adapted physical activity specialists to support inclusive sports education. Due to the decline in student enrolment in education and an aging workforce with over 62% of teachers aged over 45, there is a significant need for high-quality study programmes to prepare competent specialists (SAR, p. 173).

The added value of the study programme is that the graduates can continue their studies in a bachelor's degree programme and obtain a qualification as a sport and health teacher at all levels of education in professional bachelor's studies (SAR, p. 175).

When describing the dynamics of the number of students (SAR, Section 3.1.4), it should be noted that the previously implemented study programme "Education and Sports Work Specialist", code 41813, was closed on August 31, 2024. Students continued their studies in the newly developed study programme "Sports and Education Specialist", licensed in 2023. Therefore, the dynamics of the number of students can be characterised for the last 6 years in the context of these two study programmes - the number of admitted students varies from 117-160 each year, with a total of 816 students enrolled.

The evaluated study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" currently has 71 students - 32 students in the first year were transferred to the sub-programme "Athletic Discipline Coach" in the academic year 2023/2024, while 39 students were admitted in the summer of 2024 (SAR, Figure 3, 176). In a conversation with the study programme director and the head of the study field, the reasons why the drop-out rate is relatively high were revealed - language problems for students whose native language is not Latvian, inability to combine studies and work, inability to study independently, etc. The study programme implementers hope that higher admission requirements in the "Sports and Education Specialist" study programme will help address not only aspects of quality improvement but also a decrease in the drop-out rate.

Since the study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" was licensed on October 4, 2023, there are no graduates. However, due to the shortage of teachers and coaches in Latvia, they have wide employment opportunities as professional sports coaches, adapted physical activity specialists

and preschool sports teachers.

2.1.5. N/A

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

The short-cycle study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" is developed according to the Latvian Qualifications Framework level 5 competencies and the Vocational Education Law. It aligns with the StF "Education and Pedagogy" and RSU's strategic goals, emphasizing the importance and quality of higher education and implements the sub-programmes such as "Preschool Sports Teacher", "Adapted Physical Activity Specialist in Education" and "Athletic Coach".

The "Sports and Education Specialist" programme is unique in Latvia - it is the only interdisciplinary short-cycle professional higher education programme that grants the qualification of "Athletic coach" and "Teacher" with a specialization in preschool education. However, the drop-out rate among students is relatively high, and it should be addressed strategically, not only by higher admission requirements but also by supporting students.

The economic and social justification for the short-cycle study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" study programme is based on European statistics showing significant growth in the sports sector and high demand for qualified professionals. The study programme addresses shortages in these sectors, particularly for adapted physical activity specialists and preschool sports teachers, and offers pathways to further education.

Strengths:

- 1) The short-cycle study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" is unique in the Latvian context since it is the only interdisciplinary short-cycle professional higher education programme, the graduates of which obtain the qualification "Athletic coach" and "Teacher" with a specialization in preschool education.
- 2) The short-cycle study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" integrates sports and education, emphasizing necessary competencies, professional development, and social context understanding.
- 3) The sub-programmes are essential, addressing the teacher shortage in Latvia by preparing sports and education professionals. They adapt content for teachers and athletic coaches, helping achieve the study programme's objectives and offer specialization and develop a wide range of professional competencies, promoting children's inclusion and personality development in education.

Weaknesses: not identified.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

Study programme "Sports and Education specialist" consists of 3 sub-programmes: "Pre-school sports teacher", "Adapted physical education specialist in Education" and "Athletic Discipline Coach". The justification for the need of all these sub-programmes is well represented in the SAR report section 3.1.3., namely, the data indicates that an important economic aspect of the sports sector is the proportion of specialists with higher education, Latvia having one of the lowest rates in Europe - 68% (Lithuania - 80% and Greece - 70%). An extra justification is provided for the sub-programme "Athletic Discipline Coach" by pointing out that there has been an increase in the employment in this area after COVID-19 pandemic during which a lot of experts left this field (SAR section 3.1.3.). Experts acknowledge and agree with the presented needs of the industry and labor

market.

Overall, the content of the study courses seem quite well justified, interconnected and complementary (SAR Annexes 19 (Study Plan) and 20.1. (Course Descriptions)). Meetings with the management of the study programme and the academic staff during the site visit convinced the experts that the study courses in all 3 sub-programmes are chosen and taught by experts many of whom apart from having academic positions also have a vast experience in the industry. The content of the study courses, part A (General educational study courses) are the same for all 3 sub-programmes, nevertheless part B (compulsory study courses in the sector and sectoral specific professional study courses) overlap only briefly, as they are tailored to the specific sub-programme (SAR, Annex 19). For example, in part B (SAR, Annex 19) “Pre-school sports teacher” sub-programme students have study courses such as “Motion play and games” and “preschool sports pedagogy”, while “Adapted physical education specialist in Education” students have study courses such as “Functional limitations and exercise” and “Ergonomic and safety principles at sports hour”, and “Athletic Discipline Coach” students have study courses such as “Nutrition” and “Sports medicine”. The tailored approach to part B study courses along with the mapping of each sub-programme to the professional standards (SAR Annex 18.2) advances the likelihood of students meeting the objectives of the overall study programme, but at the same time helps them to meet the learning outcomes in the study courses of their specific sub-programmes.

While overall, the content of the study courses seem quite well justified, interconnected and complementary, some improvements could still be made to make the study programme more holistic. The literature listed in course descriptions should be reviewed and revised to ensure it includes the most recent and relevant publications. Based on the expert opinion, the meeting with RSU LASE academic staff and also the current landscape of sport internationally and locally, there is a recommendation to incorporate in the existing study courses topics about sport ethics and integrity, especially including anti-doping, competition manipulation, safeguarding in sports and good governance. Another recommendation from experts with regards to study courses would be to include the topics of Academic Integrity and Research Ethics in one of the study courses. While “Sports and Education Specialist” is a short cycle professional study programme, at the end of the study programme students are writing a qualification paper and hence need to be aware of basic principles of Academic Integrity and Research Ethics.

While in SAR Annex 17.1. (Compliance to the National Standards) it is indicated that short cycle professional study programme “Sports and Education specialist” is in compliance with the State Education Standard and also complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 305 Regulations regarding the State Standard for Professional higher Education” and that the study programme as well is compliant with the occupational standard of “Teacher” profession (SAR Annex 18.2.). Nevertheless, to ensure full compliance, the sub-programme’s “Athletic discipline coach” content should be reassessed to fully align with the professional standard of “Athletic Coach” (corresponding to the level 5 LQF), therefore this study programme is considered as partially compliant with national regulations.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3.

According to SAR section 3.2.3. a variety of pedagogical methods are used, combining more traditional teaching methods with newer teaching methods, nevertheless it is not completely clear what is meant by more traditional teaching methods and what is meant by newer teaching methods. A clear distinction with some practical examples would be really helpful to understand this part of the study process better. Some of the examples of teaching methods in SAR section 3.2.3. are classes in the auditorium, problem-based lectures, creative seminars and problem-based practical sessions. It is also mentioned in the SAR section 3.2.3. that students have different forms of

independent work (e.g., watching and analysing video clips). As well SAR section 3.2.3. indicates that almost all study courses are developed as PowerPoint presentations and that many, which means not all of them, are available in the electronic system. Given the extensive research of different ways people learn and the scarcity of resources on some topics in Latvian, it would be recommended to make, first of all, all PowerPoint presentations utilized in the study courses available to students and secondly, to incorporate bigger diversity of study material in the study courses (also in other languages), for example, research articles, books, video materials, documentaries.

SAR section 3.2.3. indicates that a student-centred, innovative and reflexive approach is widely applied within the study courses, the student's creativity is activated, where they are given the opportunity to develop both academic and professional, intellectual and innovative, and social and practical competences of various values and self-competence. It is also mentioned in the SAR section 3.2.3. interactive teaching methodologies are applied, which facilitate the acquisition of terminology and basic problems in the area, but also the analysis and understanding of the most pressing problems of education and sport, promoting in-depth knowledge of these problems and active discussion and solutions to them. While this description is well written, from the SAR section 3.2.3. it is not clear how exactly this is carried out on a practical level. It is recommended by the experts to incorporate some practical examples, how, for example, a reflexive approach or an interactive teaching is being utilized to the achievement of the study programme aims and the learning outcomes of the study courses.

Furthermore, according to the SAR section 3.2.3. students of this study programme are encouraged to take an active part of their learning process and as examples are mentioned student participation in the student surveys to assess the quality of the specific study courses and the participation in decision making bodies, which is essentially student involvement in the quality assurance and management of the study process, not student centered learning.

Certainly, a big advantage is an opportunity for an individual study approach for students who are also high achieving athletes, coordinating their study process in accordance with their training and competition schedule.

SAR section 3.2.3. indicates: "Each academic year lecturers offer a variety of new topics for qualification papers; students can also individually choose a topic from the range of topics offered." Instead of students being offered topics for their qualification papers, it is crucial that students choose the topics of their interest and then the professor who can supervise their choice the best is sought. Finding an area of interest within the particular study field as well as making sure that in the chosen area there is a research gap itself is a task worth performing and being assessed. After all students doing the research for their qualification paper will spend a considerable amount of energy and time, so it is of utmost importance that students themselves are deeply passionate about the chosen topic.

Lastly, it was noted that the study course descriptions include attendance as part of the assessment criteria (e.g., Business and Accounting, SAR Annex 20.1). However, attendance as an assessment criterion does not accurately evaluate the stated learning outcomes of the study course and the student's competence. It may be beneficial to review and revise these criteria in the course descriptions, considering alternative assessment methods that more effectively measure student learning outcomes and competence.

2.2.4.

According to SAR Annex 19 (Study plan) one placement in total (24 CP) for study programme's all 3 sub-programmes is mandatory. SAR Annex 9.1. (Placement Agreement) indicates that the placements in the study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" are organized according to a multitude of laws and regulations, for example, Law on Higher Education Institutions, Law on the Protection of the Children's Rights and others. As well SAR Annex 9.1. provides a clear description of

purpose, organisation, management, content, assignments during the placement, duties of supervisor, duties of RSU LASE methodologist, duties of the base methodologist, advocacy and the evaluation of the placements. In SAR Annex 9.1. also a sample of tripartite agreement is attached. SAR section 3.2.4. states that for decades LASE (before merger with RSU) has been providing students with placement institutions having collaboration with more than 130 different education institutions (secondary schools, gymnasiums, primary schools, pre-school education institutions, alternative schools, specialised schools, interest education centres, and others), nevertheless in SAR section 3.2.4. mention SAR Annex 9.2. which lists the institutions RSU LASE is collaborating with within this study programme is nowhere to be found.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.

As there are no graduates yet, the qualification theses have not been defended. Consequently, the SAR provides only examples of preliminary thesis topics, rather than finalized or defended thesis. According to the SAR section 3.2.6.: "The topics of the final thesis - qualification thesis are related to the current issues in the field", nevertheless it is not clear why none of the examples with preliminary topics for the final papers are presented as an Annex or in the SAR. The only thing SAR section 3.2.6. mentions that students will do an assessment of the European and Latvian education system, including the problems of sport and health classes or an evaluation of the sports training process which essentially are not preliminary topics, but more like themes of the upcoming qualification thesis (topics, even if preliminary, should be more precise). It is difficult to evaluate this criterion based on the descriptions provided in the SAR section 3.2.6.

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

Overall, the study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" with all three of its sub-programmes "Preschool Sports Teacher", "Adapted Physical Activity specialist in Education" and "Athletic Discipline Coach" is topical and aligns strongly with the needs of the current labour market in the country. While described study implementation methods align well with the intended study programme aims and the study course learning outcomes, providing practical examples might be useful to better understand how at least some of them are utilized in real life classrooms. What is more, based on the current academic and professional landscape in academia and the industry, a couple of highly relevant topics are suggested to be added in already existing study courses. Well planned placement structure is in place for this study programme and all 3 of its sub-programmes. Last but not least, an important change in the way how Qualification Paper topics are chosen should be seriously considered as the suggested approach is more in alignment with student-centered learning than the existing one.

Strengths:

- 1) Study programme's topicality and alignment with the very pressing labour market needs in the country.
- 2) Well planned placement structure.
- 3) An opportunity for individual study approach (aligned with the training and competition schedule) for students who are also high performance athletes.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Sub-programme's "Athletic discipline coach" partial alignment with the professional standard of "Athletics Coach" (corresponding to the level 5 LQF). Lack of Sport Ethics and Integrity related topics covered in the existing study courses. Lack of Academic Integrity and Research Ethics topics

covered in the existing study courses.

2) Qualification paper topics being offered to students.

3) Attendance as an assessment criteria for study courses (e.g., Business and Accounting).

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

General information about RSU's study provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and financial provision can be found in chapter 1.3 of this report.

Most of the study facilities at RSU LASE are equipped with modern technologies. During the tour of the RSU LASE facilities, it became clear that as for now not all classrooms are equipped with up-to-date multimedia equipment, but these materials are gradually being installed (Tour of the RSU LASE facilities).

RSU LASE utilizes effective information systems, including access to the RSU e-studies platform, to support students' learning processes.

The LASE Sport Brands Library provides access to the collection, databases and information systems for Latvian Sports and education specialists. The collection contains more than 200.000 copies and consists mainly of educational literature in various fields of science, a.o. pedagogy, psychology, physiology, sports medicine and other fields related to sports science. Since July 1st 2024, the LASE Sport Brands Library has been included in the RSU Library Infrastructure. This means that students and staff from LASE have access to all the information sources of RSU .

The experts group has noticed that the physical material (books) present in RSU LASE library has limited access. The library is only open during the business hours (9am - 5pm), in contrast to the RSU library that is open from 8.30am to 7 pm on working days and from 10am to 5pm on Saturdays. The collection at RSU LASE looks rather outdated and contains several old books (e.g., Деркач, А.А. Педагогика и психология деятельности организатора детского спорта Иосква : Росвещение, 1985. 335 с; Тер-Ованесян, А.А. Педагогика спорта Киев : Здоров'я, 1986. 204, [3] с.; Никитюк, Б.А. Анатомия и спортивная морфология Москва : Физкультура и спорт, 1989. 174, [2] lpp., [64] lpp.(Атлас анатомических рисунков). Next, there are no self-return services (Tour of the RSU LASE facilities).

The material and technical provisions are adequate given the specificity of the study programme.

First, there are adequate sports facilities for students and staff, organized in two blocks (Block A with sports hall, two gyms, and a fitness hall, and Block B with a sports hall, two wrestling halls, physiotherapy hall, functional fitness hall, athletics arena and stadium) (SAR, p. 154). The athletic rooms and the stadium are not available in the winter period, but infrastructure is rented elsewhere in the city (Tour of the RSU LASE facilities).

Second, there are two well-equipped research units: the Sports Science Research Laboratory, and the Health Sports Research Centre. These units are the results of funding from the European Regional Development Fund, the state budget, and RSU LASE itself. The labs are available for staff and students to carry out research.

The expert team was impressed with the equipment that is available. The lab equipment is up to

date, both the fixed and mobile material, in the different significant areas of sports education research. The materials allow RSU LASE members to conduct innovative research, namely in the field of Biomechanics, Physiology and Psychology (force platforms, EMG, kinematic analysis apparatus, balance analysis equipment, ergometers of different types, cardiorespiratory assessment equipment, reaction time facilities, among others from daily basis work) (Tour of the RSU LASE facilities).

Both students and staff can use specialized lecture halls and sport halls, suited for both theoretical and practical classes in a variety of sport games, gyms and soft-surface halls. The equipment takes into account the specificities of the sub-programmes. For 'Athletic Discipline Coach', the equipment can be adapted for specific sports, for 'Adapted Physical Activity Specialist in Education' the equipment is appropriate for working with people with special (educational) needs, and 'Pre-schools Sports Teacher' requires sports equipped suited for small children (SAR, 154).

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.

The financial resources were provided by the state budget funding for study places (42%) and fees for study places (58%). The main source of funding is the tuition fee (financed by private individuals or legal entities) and state budget funding for the study places (no additional state budget funding was foreseen for this new short cycle (professional) study programme). The study programme is to be funded by private and legal entities, with a tuition fee of 2500 EUR for the 2024 intake.

RSU plans to allocate to RSU LASE up to 18 study places each academic year from the existing professional bachelor's programme 'Sport Science'. In the SAR (p. 188), no detailed cost accounting has been carried out for the study programme, and the calculations are based on the level of the implementation units, thus the costs are an average for all the sub-programmes.

Figure 2 (SAR, p. 176) presents the student statistics for the Sport and Education Specialist study programme, which was offered until the introduction of the new Sport and Education Specialist programme. The new study programme has higher admission requirements than its predecessor, with the first admission occurring in July 2024. A total of 30 students transitioned from the previous study programme to the new one. For the study programme the minimum number of students required to maintain its financial viability is not specified. Also, no expenditure is foreseen for the development of the study programme until it is cost-effective.

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

Since July 1st, 2024, LASE has become a structural unit of RSU, granting students and staff access to RSU's scientific, informational, material, and technical resources. This integration enhances academic and research opportunities.

The RSU LASE Sports Brands Library is now part of the RSU library system; however, its book collection is outdated and less accessible due to limited opening hours and the absence of a self-return service. Improvements are needed to align it with RSU library standards.

While most study facilities at RSU LASE are equipped with modern technologies, further upgrades are necessary to fully meet contemporary academic and research demands, as observed during the tour of the facilities.

RSU LASE benefits from well-equipped sports facilities and two advanced research units: the Sports Science Research Laboratory and the Health Sports Research Centre. These facilities support high-quality research and account for the specific needs of the sub-programmes.

The financial resources were provided by the state budget funding for study places (42%) and fees for study places (58%). The main source of funding is the tuition fee and the state budget funding for the study places. The programme is to be funded by private and legal entities, with a tuition fee

of 2500 EUR for the 2024 intake.

Strengths:

- 1) Since July 1st 2024, students and staff have access to the vast collection of physical and e-resources of the RSU Library.
- 2) There are equipped sports facilities and two advanced research units: the Sports Science Research Laboratory, and the Health Sports Research Centre.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The vast book collection of the RSU LASE library looks rather outdated and contains several old books.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, including informational resources (library), material and technical support, and financial resources, fully meets the necessary conditions for study programme's implementation and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes.

The evaluation of study programme resources remains unaffected, as students and staff, in addition to accessing older books, also have access to the RSU main library and a wide range of journal articles. In modern learning environments, books as a resource have become comparatively less significant than in the past.

Moreover, since the consolidation process is in its initial phase, the weaknesses identified relate to the current situation. What was observed and discussed during the visit shows that everything is in the process of development - renovations of premises, financial planning, student involvement in the RSU Student Union, etc. The observations of experts give confidence that the weaknesses have the potential to be improved.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

According to experts' opinion based on the information of the SAR and from the site visit, the qualifications of the teaching staff involved in the Short Cycle Professional Study Programme (SCSP) "Sport and Education Specialist" are appropriate in both academic and professional terms. The teaching staff is composed of experienced academic staff and knowledgeable practitioners. The academic staff with high academic degrees teach mainly theoretical study courses whereas teachers with extensive experience and achievements in sport education or sport teach practical courses. Students could acquire both theoretical and practical knowledge to enter more successfully into the labour market.

According to SAR (pp. 189-190, and Annex 24.7), 51 academic staff are involved in the implementation of the SCSP "Sport and Education Specialist". The qualifications of the teaching staff meet the requirements of laws and regulations, as ~80% of the academic staff involved in the study programme have a doctoral degree (SAR, Annex 24.7).

The mandatory and restricted elective parts of the sub-programme "Adapted Physical Activity Specialist in Education" are delivered by 27 lecturers, of whom 20 hold academic positions at RSU.

Of the 20 elected academic staff members, five are professors, seven are associate professors, five are assistant professors, one is a lecturer, and two are senior researchers (SAR, p. 189, and Annex 24.7).

The mandatory and restricted elective parts of the sub programme "Preschool Sport Teacher" are delivered by 39 lecturers, of whom 28 hold academic positions at RSU. Of the 28 elected academic staff members, six are professors, ten are associate professors, eight are assistant professors, two are lecturers, and two are senior researchers (SAR, pp. 189-190, and Annex 24.7).

The mandatory and restricted elective parts of the sub-programme "Athletic Discipline Coach" are delivered by 44 lecturers, of whom 32 hold academic positions at RSU. Of the 32 elected academic staff members, seven are professors, ten are associate professors, eight are assistant professors, five are lecturers, and two are senior researchers (SAR, p. 190, and Annex 24.7).

The elected academic staff members also carry out research work in the field, participating in some funded research projects, or by carrying out research related to the study process, funded by the faculty, national study and science base funding, including the participation in several conferences and seminars and the publication of scientific articles. In fact, the qualification of the teaching staff members (e.g., academic qualifications, participation in different pedagogical projects, professional background) enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. However, the presence of foreign lectures, even in a remote mode, could increase the quality and diversity of the study programme.

2.4.2.

As the study programme was licensed on 4 October 2023, there have been no significant changes in the composition of teaching staff during the reporting period that would affect the quality of the study programme.

The data on the lecturers involved in the study programme and its sub-programmes indicate that there have been no significant changes in the composition of the teaching staff during the review period, despite the fact that during the reorganisation with RSU, up to 17% of lecturers did not continue their employment (SAR, p. 193).

The qualification of the lecturers and the proportion of those employed in their primary occupation (up to 93%) positively influence the stability, quality, and alignment of the study programme with labour market demands. The small proportion of adjunct lecturers (6.5-7%) also indicates the ability to provide students with specialised knowledge without relying on external resources.

In summary, RSU takes measures so that changes in the composition of the teaching staff do not negatively affect the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.

There is a good connection between the scientific research and the study process, especially under the courses that support the "Education and Pedagogy" field and this study programme. Study courses included in the sub-programmes are related to the research areas of the teaching staff, especially considering the interdisciplinary focus of the interventions and the activity of the elected academic staff.

There are some projects and publications carried out by the teaching staff and researchers involved in the study field, including publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus (SAR, Annex 6.4 and 6.5). Research in the fields of Education and Pedagogy is carried out in close cooperation with several research fields, developing scientific and applied research. Overall, these research outputs are positive, highlighting the effort of the teaching staff and the RSU board to develop and improve the research activities.

Despite the difficulties and constraints to be involved in granted projects reported during the assessment visit by the teaching staff, the lecturers of the SCSP “Sport and Education Specialist” participate in some research projects and publish their work at international seminars and in scientific journals. However, there are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with the study programme. Furthermore, the strategy of the University should consider reinforcing the publications as original research in the most prestigious journals in the field of “Education and Pedagogy” related to this study programme.

The teaching staff members present several years of practical experience in the field, which is more significant regarding the staff who work mainly at different institutions rather than RSU (guest lectures). As it can be observed in the SAR (Annex 24.7) and in the curriculum vitae presented by each staff member several teachers are high-level professionals in their respective field which significantly enhances the quality of the SCSP “Sport and Education Specialist”.

2.4.5.

Cooperation between teaching staff is facilitated through meetings, during which the study programme director and the director of the study field inform them of the desired course of action. The study programme director organises meetings with the Programme teaching staff as necessary to improve the content and interconnectedness of the study programme. Teaching staff is involved in both thesis and placement defence committees, listening to presentations about students’ work, allowing them to identify the weaknesses in students’ knowledge, skills, and competences. Teaching staff members regularly improve the content of study courses, update e-environment materials, as well as successfully teach in a distance learning process using MS TEAMS and KVS system (SAR, p. 193).

Teaching staff members of the study programme collaborate on study course descriptions, research directions and projects. In-depth study course mapping and observation of lectures and classes are also carried out. Moreover, teaching staff members are grouped into research directions, where they work together, under the guidance of a research direction coordinator, to investigate specific questions, compile the results, and produce publications and reports. The setting and implementation of common objectives is promoted to foster cooperation between teaching staff members in professional development activities, international events and informal activities. Although these procedures are of great importance, it would be important to define a more detailed plan to coordinate all these pedagogical and scientific activities.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff members enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. The research outputs are overall positive, highlighting the effort of the teaching staff and the RSU board to develop and improve the research activities. Nevertheless, there are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with the study programme.

Strengths:

- 1) The qualification of the teaching staff members, including both academic staff and teachers with experience in the field.
- 2) The teaching staff members present several years of practical experience in the field.
- 3) There are some positive research outputs.

Weaknesses:

- 1) There are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with the study programme.
- 2) No foreign lecturers, even in a remote mode.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The qualification (education, experience in the field) of the teaching staff members and the research outputs enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the SCSP “Sport and Education Specialist” and the relevant study courses.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

SAR Annex 17.1 (“17.1_Anx_Compl_Nat_Standard.pdf”) and the corresponding SAR Annex 19 (“19_Anx_Study_plan_Sport_Ed_spec.pdf”) confirms that the short cycle professional study programme complies with Cabinet of Ministers’ Regulation No. 305 “Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās augstākās izglītības standartu”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

SAR Annex 19 (“19_Anx_Study_plan_Sport_Ed_spec.pdf”) and SAR Annex 20.1 (“20.1_Anx_course_descrip_Spo_Ed_Spec.pdf”) provide information that allows to assess that the sub-programme “Adapted physical activity specialist in Education” complies with the Teacher professional standard (approved on June 12, 2020).

SAR Annex 18.2 confirms that the sub-programme “Pre-school sports teacher” complies with the Teacher professional standard (approved on June 12, 2020).

SAR Annex 18.2 also confirms that the sub-programme “Athletic discipline coach” mostly complies with the Athletic Coach professional standard (approved on December 14, 2022).

However, SAR Annex 18.2 indicates that the required professional knowledge at the application level, as specified in section 4.1.3 - Sport ethics, is linked to the study course “Professional ethics”, which is not included in the study programme as indicated by the study plan (SAR Annex 19) and course descriptions (SAR Annex 20.1). Moreover, the topic of sports ethics is missing from all other course descriptions (Annex 20.1). Therefore, it is unclear whether the topic of sports ethics is covered in the sub-programme “Athletic discipline coach”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The provided study course descriptions (SAR Annex 20.1 “20.1_piel_kursu_apraksti_Spo_izgl_spec.pdf”) are prepared in Latvian. The study course descriptions include most of the requirements defined by the Law on Higher Education Institutions. It was noted that the total number of working hours applicable to each course, as well as a breakdown of hours also designated for the exam and student independent work, is not included within the respective study course description. This omission results in an incomplete presentation of the organization of student independent work. Furthermore, it is recommended that each study course description include a designation of its placement within the study programme (part A, B or C).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The provided Diploma sample (SAR Annex 24.1 “24.1_AnxDiploma_Diploma_supplement.pdf” and the corrected supplement “Pap24.1.1_piel_Diploma_pielik_Sporta_izgl_spec_LV_ENG”) conforms to the procedure for issuing state-recognised higher education documents as outlined in Cabinet of Ministers’ Regulation No. 202 “Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

RSU confirmation letter 19.07.2024 Nr.3-DPAD-6/382/2024 (SAR Annex 24.4, “Certification Regarding the Knowledge of Latvian”) verifies that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet of Ministers’ Regulation No. 157 (Adopted 8 March 2022) “Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the

Proficiency in the Official Language”; however, the attached resumes of staff (SAR Annex 6.2) reveal that one teaching staff member (professor involved in the implementation of the sub-programme “Athletic Discipline Coach” according to SAR Annex 6.1 “6.1_Anx_acad_staff_overview_ENG.xlsx”) holds a B1 level in Latvian writing. According to Cabinet Regulation No. 157, the minimum required level of Latvian proficiency for teaching staff is C1.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The attached sample form of a general study agreement (SAR Annex 24.6. “24.6_pielikums_Stud_liguma_paraugs.pdf”) includes all the requirements stipulated in Cabinet of Ministers’ Regulation No. 70 “Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The attached agreement with Daugavpils University (DU) confirms that DU agrees to offer students in the sub-programmes “Pre-school sports teacher” and “Adapted physical activity specialist in Education” the opportunity to continue their studies within the DU short cycle study programme “Pre-school teacher”. The attached confirmation Nr.3-DPAD-6/390/2024 (19.07.2024) confirms that RSU provides students in the sub-programme “Athletic discipline coach” with the possibility to continue their studies within the RSU professional Bachelor's study programme “Sports Science”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

RSU 19.07.2024. confirmation letter No. 3-DPAD-6/383/2024 to foundation “Academic Information Centre” states, that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme fails to be accredited or the licence of the study programme is withdrawn due to the actions or inactions of the university and the student does not wish to continue their studies in another study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

SAR Annex 17.2 ("17.2_Anx_Compl_Spec_Reg_Framework.pdf") confirms that the sub-programmes "Pre-school sports teacher" and "Adapted physical activity specialist in Education" that award the Teacher professional qualification comply with the Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No. 569 "Noteikumi par pedagogiem nepieciešamo izglītību un profesionālo kvalifikāciju un pedagogu profesionālās kompetences pilnveides kārtību".

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study programme complies with most regulatory requirements. To ensure full compliance, the sub-programme's "Athletic discipline coach" content should be assessed for full alignment with the Athletic Coach professional standard, corresponding to the level 5 LQF. Additionally, it should be ensured that all teaching staff members possess proficiency in Latvian at the minimum required level of C1, as stipulated in Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No. 157. Furthermore, the identified discrepancies in the study course descriptions should be corrected to ensure full compliance. Specifically, descriptions should include the total working hours for each course and a breakdown of hours designated also for the exam and student independent work.

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

The short-cycle study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" (41141; 41813) aligns with the aims of the study field "Education and Pedagogy" and the title, the goals of the study programme and each of professional qualifications to be obtained and its requirements are all interrelated. The learning outcomes are related to the needs of the region and labour market and address shortages in sports and educational sectors, particularly for athletic coaches, adapted physical activity specialists, and preschool sports teachers offering pathways to further education. According to experts, there are no deficiencies identified that cannot be eliminated during the 2-year accreditation period. There are no obstacles to implementing the study programme in declared form as full-time studies in Latvian with a study duration of 2 years, which corresponds to the demands of a short-cycle study programme. The place of implementation - RSU LASE, located in Riga, is well-equipped with sports facilities and two advanced research units: the Sports Science Research Laboratory and the Health Sports Research Centre that support high-quality research and account for the specific needs of the study programme and its sub-programmes.

The study provision, including informational resources (library), material and technical support, and financial resources, fully meets the necessary conditions for programme implementation and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes.

The study programme complies with most regulatory requirements. To ensure full compliance, the sub-programme's "Athletic discipline coach" content should be assessed for full alignment with the Athletic Coach professional standard, corresponding to the level 5 LQF. Also, study course descriptions should be improved to ensure full compliance by including the total working hours for each course and a breakdown of hours designated also for the exam and student independent work. The qualification of the teaching staff members and the research outputs enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the SCSP "Sport and Education Specialist" and the relevant study courses. However, it should be ensured that all teaching staff members possess proficiency in Latvian at the minimum required level of C1, as stipulated in Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No. 157.

Among the most important strengths the experts have identified the following aspects:

- 1) The short-cycle study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" is unique in the Latvian context since it is the only interdisciplinary short-cycle professional higher education programme, the graduates of which obtain the qualification "Athletic coach" and "Teacher" with a specialization in preschool education.
- 2) The qualification of the teaching staff members, including both academic staff and teachers with experience in the field.
- 3) The teaching staff members present several years of practical experience in the field.
- 4) Well planned placement structure.
- 5) An opportunity for individual study approach (aligned with the training and competition schedule) for students who are also high performance athletes.

Based on the available information in SAR and from the site visit, there were identified weaknesses that have the most significant impact on the quality of the study programme:

- 1) The content of sub-programme "Athletic discipline coach" is not fully aligned with the Athletic Coach professional standard, corresponding to the level 5 LQF.
- 2) There are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with the study programme.
- 3) No foreign lecturers, even in a remote mode.
- 4) There is a need to incorporate Sport Ethics and Integrity, as well as Academic Integrity and Research Ethics topics in already existing study courses for all sub-programmes of this study programme.

Evaluation of the study programme "Sport and Education Specialist"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Sport and Education Specialist"

Short-term recommendations

1) Until the study field is submitted for accreditation, in order to promote student-centered learning, stop offering students topics for qualification papers and incorporate in the study process teaching how to define research gaps and find an area of research that interests students themselves.

2) Until the study field is submitted for accreditation, in order to promote student-centered learning, stop offering students topics for qualification papers and incorporate in the study process teaching how to define research gaps and find an area of research that interests students themselves.

3) Within the next year, review the study course descriptions, and supplement them with the total working hours applicable to each course, providing a clear breakdown of hours designated for the exam, student independent work, and lectures/seminars, to ensure compliance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and to improve student understanding of the expected workload for their independent study. Additionally, it is recommended to include an indication within each study course description of its placement within the study programme (Part A, B, or C).

4) Within the next year, review and revise the literature listed in course descriptions to ensure it includes the most recent and relevant publications.

5) Within the next year, review and revise the assessment criteria within study course descriptions to better align with stated learning outcomes and student competencies. Remove attendance as an assessment criterion, as it does not provide an accurate or meaningful measure of these elements and consider implementing alternative assessment methods that more effectively evaluate student learning outcomes and competence.

Long-term recommendations

1) Incorporate more actively the teaching staff members of this study programme in scientific projects to overcome the differences in the research outputs among teaching staff members.

2) Until the next accreditation process, attract at least 3 foreign lecturers from abroad (teaching remotely or in-person).

3) Update and modernize the RSU LASE library's book collection by acquiring recent books and replacing outdated materials within two to six years.

4) Incorporate Academic Integrity and Research Ethics topics in already existing study courses for all sub-programmes of this study programme.

II - "Health, Physical Activity and Security" ASSESSMENT

II - "Health, Physical Activity and Security" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

On July 1 2024, the LASE was merged with RSU and now exists as a structural unit - RSU LASE (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 903 of 13 December 2022 "On the Reorganisation of the Latvian Academy of Sports Education). Before the merger the first cycle study programme "Health, Physical Activity and Security" was implemented by LASE. The study programme is aligned with the study field "Education and Pedagogy" and the strategic goals of the university (see SAR, Table 1, Section 1.1) based on a common understanding of the importance and quality of higher education (SAR, p. 5).

First cycle (professional bachelor) study programme "Health, Physical Activity and Security", students can choose to study in the following sub-programmes - "Sports and Health Teacher" and "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher", which indicates the compliance of this study programme with the study field "Education and Pedagogy", the aim of which is "to prepare qualified specialists for work in educational and pedagogical environments" (SAR, p. 25).

According to the SAR (p. 137), RSU LASE is the only higher education institution in Latvia that carries out research in the field of sports pedagogy with more than 100 years of experience in providing research-based training and professional development of sports educators. The graduates of the study programme "Health, Physical Activity and Security" obtain a professional bachelor's degree in teacher education and the qualification "Teacher" with a specialization in the new subjects of health and physical activity and health, security and physical activity. In overall, the competences set as expected results are both in line with the aim of the study field, as well as national standard for the teacher profession.

2.1.2.

The study programme is a first-cycle professional bachelor study programme developed according to the requirements of the Proposals for Conceptually New Competence-Based Teacher Education in Latvia prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science. The compliance of the study programme with the Cabinet Regulation No. 305 of 13 June 2023, Regulations regarding the State Education Standard (SAR Annex 17.1) and the sector-specific regulatory framework (SAR Annex 17.2) is justified by the description provided in SAR Section 3.1.2 (p. 137) and analysed in the SAR section 2.2.1..

SAR Section 3.1.2 describes the compliance of the title of the study programme “Health, Physical Activity and Security” with the objectives, tasks, expected outcomes, and content of the sub-programmes. The study outcomes of the sub-programmes “Sports and Health Teacher” and “Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher” are aligned with the proposed outcomes of the study programme (p. 130). The sub-programmes expand the study programme's study outcomes to the specific professional needs of teachers, thus enhancing the study programme's relevance to both labour market demands and students' individual interests.

The study programme code is justified in the SAR (p. 137) as the first part of the code “42” indicates the type of educational programme - first cycle professional higher education corresponding to the sixth level professional qualification and professional Bachelor's degree (<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-glossary/glossary/bachelors-or-equivalent-level-iscd-level-6-efq-level-6>), and the second part of the code “141” indicates the group of educational study programmes - teacher education. When graduating, students are awarded a professional Bachelor's degree in teacher education and the qualification of a teacher.

The scope, duration, mode of delivery, and format of the study programme correspond with the requirements for obtaining a professional Bachelor's degree in teacher education and the qualification of a teacher. Accordingly to the sub-programmes, there is a difference in the duration of studies and the amount of ECTS to be acquired:

- 1) Sports and Health Teacher - 240 ECTS, 4 years full-time regular studies, 4 years and 6 months part-time regular studies;
- 2) Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher - 287 ECTS, 4 years 8 months full-time regular studies, 5 years 6 months part-time regular studies.

Based on the conversation with the study programme director and the head of the study field during an onsite visit, the differences in duration of the sub-programmes were clarified and justified as appropriate to ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes for the qualification of a teacher in both the subject area “Health and Physical Activity” and “National Defence Training”. It was clear that both sub-programmes are essential and complement the overall offer of the study programme, which helps to address the shortage of teachers in the Latvian education system. Mapping of the outcomes of the sub-programmes are revealed in SAR Annex 18.1., and compliance with the standard of the profession of TEACHER in Annex 18.2.

Applicants to the study programme must go through the admission procedure that is appropriate to the aim of the study programme, considering the admission requirements in the Programme (see SAR Annex 1.2.1):

- centralised examination (CE in Latvian, CE in Mathematics, CE in Foreign Language),
- the assessment in subjects “Sports” or “Sports and Health” (not lower than 7),
- the results of the entrance examination in physical fitness (PF),
- the assessment of the justification for choosing the teacher's profession (in writing and orally).

The entrance requirements include a special condition for admission to the sub-programme “Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher” - following the Law on the National Defence Training and the Youth Guard (https://www.vvc.gov.lv/en/laws-and-regulations-republic-latvia-english/law-national-defence-training-and-youth-guard?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F), it is allowed to admit only

employees of the Youth Guard Centre in the position of youth guard instructor.

The entrance requirements correspond to the name of the study programme, code, professional qualification to be obtained, as well as the goals, tasks, and study results of the professional qualification.

2.1.3.

Since the study programme "Health, Physical Activity and Security" was licensed in 2022, the SAR states that there have been no significant changes to the programme since licensing (SAR, Section 3.1.1, Table 1, p.134).

However, slight improvements have been made in certain areas, namely the aim, objectives, and learning outcomes have been specified during the evaluation procedure with an emphasis on each sub-programme.

The most significant changes to the study programme are because of the centralised switch from the national to the international (ECTS) credit system. According to SAR (p. 136), the alignment of all study course credits to the ECTS requirements has been implemented, as set out in the RSU Study Process Development Plan for Social Sciences and Health Studies, approved at the Senate meeting on 13 February and 12 March 2024 (SAR Annex 4.1). The transition to the new credit system is addressed in the guidelines "Transition to the new credit system. Recommendations for study programme directors and course leaders" (see SAR Annex 28). However, during the on-site meetings with former StF director (RSU LASE) and current StF director (RSU), experts got to know that there still are study course descriptions that have to be aligned for transition to ECTS in terms of content.

2.1.4.

The issues regarding the economic and social justification of the study programme were discussed with the RSU management, the study programme director, and the head of the study field, and the main aspects are presented in the SAR (Section 3.1.3, p. 139-141). In accordance with the information report of the Ministry of Education "Proposals for the Provision of Conceptually New Competence-Based Teacher Education in Latvia", published on 23.11.2017, LASE was (before merger with RSU) the leading higher education institution in the development of study programmes for the preparation of sports teachers.

The substantiation is based on the data used to identify the development needs of teachers in three levels - individual, organisational, and system level - to ensure that the current needs of the labour market are reflected in the content of the study programme in accordance with the situation in Latvia (see Figure 1, SAR p. 139). The study programme's development involved collaboration with multiple partners and experts from the University of Latvia (LU), Daugavpils University (DU), University of Liepaja (now RTU LA), Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU), and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, ensuring it meets labour market demands and supports the overall development of Latvia's education sector. The need to provide secondary education institutions with national defense teachers is very urgent - this means that, starting from the 2024/2025 academic year, around 250 national defense education teachers will be in demand (Information report by the Ministry of Defence "On the Introduction of the National Defence Education and Development of the Youth Guard" in 2019-2027, available in Latvian - <https://tap.mk.gov.lv/mk/tap/?pid=40467754>).

The sub-programmes "Sports and Health Teacher" and "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" are socially and economically justified, addressing specialist shortages and promoting sustainability in education. Due to the decline in student enrolment in education and aging teachers, there is a significant need for high-quality study programmes to prepare competent specialists (SAR, p. 140) because of the insufficient number of new specialists entering schools. The two sub-programmes, which focus on preparing teachers for sports and health education, as well as national defence education will help to reduce the labour force shortage and promote the sustainability of

the education sector in Latvia. Also, there is a need to plan the resources of the labour market to provide sports teachers in all regions of Latvia. This understanding is fully consistent with the aims and development direction of the Programme of the study field "Education and Pedagogy".

Also, the academic staff of the study programme was convinced that these sub-programmes would enhance the sector's competitiveness and contribute to Latvia's economic and social development by offering opportunities to young specialists to integrate into the labour market. The study programme director works closely with employers and professional organizations to find appropriate internship and employment opportunities. Moreover, during the experts' on-site visit, conversations with employers revealed that they highly value the professional competence of graduates.

When describing the dynamics of the number of students (SAR, Section 3.1.4), it should be noted that the study programme got its license in 2022. Therefore, the dynamics of the number of students can be characterised for the last 3 years – the number of admitted students is on an upward trend, with a total of 187 students enrolled in part-time and full-time studies (SAR, Figure 2, p. 142). The study programme offers both winter and summer intake, therefore, an increase in the number of students can be predicted. However, SAR Annex 16 (Statistical data on students) does not reflect the dynamics of students in each of sub-programmes.

Since the study programme "Sports and Education Specialist" was licensed on December 12, 2022, there are no graduates. However, they have wide employment opportunities in all levels of education, as there is a shortage of teachers for sports and health education, as well as national defence education in the labour market of Latvia.

2.1.5. N/A

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

RSU LASE's long-standing experience in sports pedagogy and research, as well as its unique position as the only higher education institution in Latvia offering sports education, enhance the credibility and relevance of the first cycle study programme "Health, Physical Activity and Security" and its two sub-programmes - "Sports and Health Teacher" and "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher". One of the main strengths of the study programme is its strong economic and social justification, supported by collaboration with multiple partners and experts. The study programme addresses the urgent need for national defense education teachers and sports teachers in Latvia, aligning with labor market demands and promoting sustainability in education.

The "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" sub-programme has a particular admission requirement that restricts entry to employees of the Youth Guard Centre, which may limit the number of applicants. The high demand for national defense education teachers may put pressure on the programme to quickly produce qualified graduates, potentially affecting the quality of education. Additionally, the lack of data on the dynamics of students in each sub-programme and the absence of employment indicators for graduates make it difficult to fully assess the programme's effectiveness and impact. Addressing these issues could help improve the programme's overall success and sustainability.

Strengths:

- 1) RSU LASE's long-standing experience in sports pedagogy research and its unique position as the only higher education institution in Latvia offering sports teacher education in the study programme "Health, Physical Activity and Security" further enhance the programme's credibility and relevance.
- 2) The sub-programmes "Sports and Health Teacher" and "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" address the specific professional needs of teachers and align with labor market demands, thus enhancing the sector's competitiveness and contributing to Latvia's economic and social development by integrating young specialists into the labor market.

3) The "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" sub-programme is a crucial component of the "Health, Physical Activity and Security" study programme and plays an essential role in addressing the shortage of national defence teachers in Latvia.

Weaknesses:

1) The duration of the sub-programme "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" and the unique admission requirement that restricts entry to employees of the Youth Guard Centre may limit the interest of the applicants, as well as the high demand for national defense education teachers may put pressure on the study programme to educate qualified graduates, potentially affecting the quality of education.

2) The lack of data on the dynamics of students in each sub-programme makes it difficult to predict the number of graduates who will qualify as sports and health teachers and who will obtain the qualification as sports, health and national defence teachers.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

Given the shortage of physical education teachers (SAR section 3.1.3) in the country and the current geopolitical context in the area, the study programme and indeed both study sub-programmes "Sports and Health Teachers" and "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" is topical.

Overall, the content of the study courses seem quite well justified, interconnected and complementary (SAR Annexes 19 (Study Plan) and 20.1. (Course Descriptions)). Meetings with the management of the study programme and the academic staff during the site visit convinced the experts that the study courses in all 2 sub-programmes are chosen and taught by experts many of whom apart from having academic positions also have a vast experience in the industry. The content of the study courses, part A (General educational study courses and Basic sectoral theoretical courses) are the same for both sub-programmes, nevertheless part B (compulsory study courses in the sector and sectoral specific professional study courses) differ as they are tailored to the specific sub-programmes (SAR, Annex 19). For example, in part B (SAR Annex 19) "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" students have study courses worth 132 credit points, but the sub-programme "Sports and Health Teachers" only 96 credit points. Some of the extra study courses for the sub-programme "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" students are "Basic military training" and "Courses for managers of stationary shooting classes". The tailored approach to part B study courses along with the mapping of each sub-programme to the professional standards (SAR Annex 18.2) advances the likelihood of students meeting the objectives of the overall study programme, but at the same time helps them to meet the learning outcomes in the study courses of their specific sub-programmes.

Some improvements could still be made to make the study programme more holistic. There is a need to review and revise the literature listed in course descriptions to ensure it includes the most recent and relevant publications. Based on the conversations during the onsite visit and the current landscape of sport (both in academia and industry) internationally and locally, apart from study courses "Teaching and learning in the context of diversity" and "Inclusive and special sports education", there is a recommendation from experts (but also agreed by the academic staff during the on-site visit) to either incorporate study courses about sport ethics and integrity related topics or cover these topics in one/some of the existing study courses, specifically about topics of anti-doping, competition manipulation, safeguarding in sports and good governance. Another recommendation from experts with regards to study courses would be to include the topics of Academic Integrity and Research Ethics in one of the study courses, for example, in "Qualitative Research in Sports and Health Education" or "Quantitative Research in Sports and Health Education" as at the final stages

of the study programme students are writing their bachelor thesis and diploma paper and hence need to be aware of the basic principles of Academic Integrity and Research Ethics.

As indicated in SAR Annex 17.1. (Compliance to the National Standards), professional Bachelor's study programme "Health, physical activity and security" is in compliance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 305 Regulations regarding the State Standard for Professional higher Education". The study programme is partially compliant with the occupational standard of "Teacher" profession (SAR Annex 18.2.). During the on-site visit the management of the study programme as well as the team who prepared the SAR explained that, for example, the study programme's sub programme "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" was indeed set up directly after it was decided by the government that there is a need for such profession as a Defence Teacher and therefore the sub programme was created specifically following the required standards for National Defence Teachers. Nevertheless, it was noted that the study programme only partially complies with the Teacher professional standard, corresponding to the level 6 LQF (approved on June 12, 2020).

SAR Annex 18.2 does not indicate whether the required professional knowledge at the application level - Personal data protection (section 5.1 of the Teacher professional standard) and Professional terminology in national language (section 5.3) is integrated into any of the study courses from the study programme. Additionally, these topics are absent from both the course descriptions (SAR Annex 20.1) and the study plan (SAR Annex 19). Therefore, it remains unclear whether Personal data protection and Professional terminology in national language are covered by the study programme.

Additionally, SAR Annex 18.2 indicates that the knowledge of a foreign language at the level A2 and the knowledge of foreign language at the level B2 (section 5.3) is linked to several study courses that are conducted in Latvian and their descriptions do not include foreign language learning (SAR Annex 20.1). Therefore, it is unclear if the study programme provides foreign language training at the level required by Teacher professional standard, corresponding to the level 6 LQF.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3.

According to SAR section 3.2.3. a variety of pedagogical methods are used, combining more traditional teaching methods with newer teaching methods, nevertheless it is not completely clear what is meant by more traditional teaching methods and what is meant by newer teaching methods. A clear distinction with some practical examples would be really helpful to understand this part of the study process better. Some of the examples of teaching methods in SAR section 3.2.3. are classes in the auditorium, problem-based lectures, creative seminars and problem-based practical sessions. It is also mentioned in the SAR section 3.2.3. that students have different forms of independent work (e.g., watching and analysing video clips).

SAR section 3.2.3 indicates that only 12,5% of study courses in the study programme are delivered remotely, thus positively contributing to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme (majority of the study courses are practical) and it would be absurd to teach them online.

As described in SAR section 3.2.3. the study process for the sub-programme "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" is planned in a manner so it would not overlap with the working hours of the Youth Guard Centre as the majority of the students in this sub programme are employed there. As well individual study approach is taken for students who are also high achieving athletes, coordinating their study process in accordance with their training and competition schedule.

SAR section 3.2.3. lacks additional information about the specifics of study implementation methods and learning for the sub-programme "Sports and Health Teacher".

While SAR 3.2.3. indicates that the teaching staff of the study programme is generally satisfied with the results of the achievements of students reaching the learning outcomes. More in-depth feedback

from the teaching staff is contradictory - there is a lecturer who has managed to incorporate student-centered learning into their study courses: "the study course encourages students to be proactive, reflective and collaborative, fostering a sense of leadership and addressing problems creatively in specific situations", but there also is a lecturer who has not managed for students to meet the learning outcomes and has struggled with the limited time and the complexity of the topics intended to be covered in his study course. Among other teaching methods, teaching staff acknowledges the value of student-centered teaching methods and students having autonomy in their learning process. Some of the methods emphasized in the SAR section 3.2.3. are active and interactive learning, self-assessment, self-reflection and self-analysis among others.

In SAR section 3.2.3. RSU assessment principles are presented: the principle of openness of assessment; the principle of compulsory assessment; the principle of assessment review options; the principle of variety of the examination types used in the assessment. SAR Annex 18.1. (Mapping VFAD) maps out how assessment criteria and methods of the study courses let students demonstrate the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

It was noted that the study course descriptions include attendance as part of the assessment criteria (e.g., Business and Accounting, SAR Annex 20.1). However, attendance as an assessment criterion does not accurately evaluate the stated learning outcomes of the study course and the student's competence. It may be beneficial to review and revise these criteria in the course descriptions, considering alternative assessment methods that more effectively measure student learning outcomes and competence.

2.2.4.

According to SAR Annex 19 (Study plan) in total 4 placements are mandatory part of study programme for full-time and part-time sub-programme "Sports and Health Teacher" (in total 30 CP) and in total 5 placements are mandatory part of study programme for full-time and part-time sub-programme "Health, physical activity and Security " (in total 38CP). SAR Annex 9.1. (Placement Agreement) indicates that the placements in the study programme "Health, physical activity and Security" are organized according to a multitude of laws and regulations, for example, Law on Higher Education Institutions, Law on the Protection of the Children's Rights and others. As well SAR Annex 9.1. provides a clear description of purpose, organisation, management, content, assignments during the placement, duties of supervisor, duties of RSU LASE methodologist, duties of the base methodologist, advocacy and the evaluation of the placements. SAR section 3.2.4 states that for decades LASE (before merger with RSU) has been providing students with placement institutions having collaboration with more than 130 different education institutions (secondary schools, gymnasiums, primary schools, pre-school education institutions, alternative schools, specialised schools, interest education centres, and others), nevertheless in SAR section 3.2.4. mentioned Annex 9.2. which lists the institutions LASE has been collaborating with within this study programme is nowhere to be found.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.

According to the SAR section 3.2.6.: "The topics of the final thesis - diploma paper or Bachelor's thesis are related to the topicality of the field", nevertheless it is not clear why none of the examples with chosen topics for the final papers are presented. While the study programme has been licensed only in 2022, SAR Annex 16 (Student Statistics) indicates that in 2023/2024 there were 18 2nd year students in this study programme. SAR Annex 19 (Study Plan) states that study courses "Bachelor's" or "Diploma work" are already held on 4th semester for full time and part-time students of sub-programme "Sports and Health Teacher". SAR Annex 20.1. (Study Course description) indicates that the assessment criteria of the study course "Bachelor's thesis I" is "Creation and approval of the

selected topic”, which means that some topics for the final thesis should already be known.

SAR section 3.2.6. states: “The sub-programmes “Sport and Health Teacher” and “Sport, Health and National Defence Teacher” offer topics that allow students to study in depth relevant issues related to sport, health education and defence. Topics include the impact of physical activity on students' emotional well-being and academic achievement, the role of the sports educator in promoting healthy lifestyles, and methods to promote students' motivation in sports lessons. Topics on the analysis of innovative approaches in sport education and the role of sport teachers in the development of socio-emotional competences. The sub-programme “Sport, Health and National Defence Education Teacher” offers topics covering the impact of national defence education on students' self-discipline and sense of responsibility, the development of civic awareness, the importance of physical fitness and the integration of national defence education into the education system. There are also topics offered to students that explore the impact of defence education on students' career choices and motivation to engage in national defence.” The topics offered to students indeed are relevant to the study field and correspond to the study programme, however instead of students being offered topics for their final theses, it is crucial that students choose the topics of their interest and then the professor who can supervise the final thesis is sought. Finding an area of interest within the particular study field as well as making sure that in the chosen area there is a research gap itself is a task worth performing and being assessed. After all students doing the research for their bachelor's thesis or diploma paper will spend a considerable amount of energy and time, so it is of utmost importance that students themselves are deeply passionate about the chosen topic.

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

Overall, the study programme “Health, physical activity and Security” with both of its sub-programmes “Sport and Health teacher” and “Sport, Health and National Defence Teacher” are topical and aligns strongly with the needs of the current labour market and the geopolitical situation in the region. While study implementation methods align well with the study programme and intended study outcomes, a couple of new and highly relevant study courses or at least topics to be added in the existing study courses are suggested. Student-centered implementation in the learning and teaching process seems to be incorporated quite well, however the way how final thesis topics are chosen should be seriously considered as the suggested approach is more in alignment with student-centered learning than the existing one.

Strengths:

- 1) Study programme's topicality and alignment with the pressing labour market needs.
- 2) Well planned placement structure.
- 3) An opportunity for individual study approach (aligned with the training and competition schedule) for students who are also high performance athletes.

Weaknesses:

- 1) No Personal Data Protection and Professional terminology in National language study courses (both required according to the Teacher Professional Standard).
- 2) No Foreign language Training (at the level required by the Teacher Professional standard) study course.
- 3) Lack of Sport Ethics and Integrity related topics covered in the existing study courses.
- 4) Lack of Academic Integrity and Research Ethics topics covered in the existing study course.
- 5) Attendance as an assessment criteria for study courses (e.g., Business and Accounting).

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

programmes)

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

General information about RSU's study provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and financial provision can be found in chapter 1.3 of this report.

Most of the study facilities at RSU LASE are equipped with modern technologies. During the tour of the RSU LASE facilities, it became clear that as for now not all classrooms are equipped with up-to-date multimedia equipment, but these materials are gradually being installed (Tour of the RSU LASE facilities).

RSU LASE utilizes effective information systems, including access to the RSU e-studies platform, to support students' learning processes.

The LASE Sport Brands Library provides access to the collection, databases and information systems for Latvian Sports and education specialists. The collection contains more than 200.000 copies and consists mainly of educational literature in various fields of science, a.o. pedagogy, psychology, physiology, sports medicine and other fields related to sports science. Since July 1st 2024, the LASE Sport Brands Library has been included in the RSU Library Infrastructure. This means that students and staff from LASE have access to all the information sources of RSU .

The evaluation committee has noticed that the physical material (books) present in RSU LASE library has limited access. The library is only open during the business hours (9am - 5pm), in contrast to the RSU library that is open from 8.30am to 7 pm on working days and from 10am to 5pm on Saturdays. The collection at RSU LASE looks rather outdated and contains several old books (e.g., Деркач, А.А. Педагогика и психология деятельности организатора детского спорта Иосква : Росвещение, 1985. 335 с; Тер-Ованесян, А.А. Педагогика спорта Киев : Здоров'я, 1986. 204, [3] с.; Никитюк, Б.А. Анатомия и спортивная морфология Москва : Физкультура и спорт, 1989. 174, [2] lpp., [64] lpp.(Атлас анатомических рисунков). Next, there are no self-return services (Tour of the RSU LASE facilities).

The material and technical provisions are adequate given the specificity of the study programme.

First, there are adequate sports facilities for students and staff, organized in two blocks (Block A with sports hall, two gyms, and a fitness hall, and Block B with a sports hall, two wrestling halls, physiotherapy hall, functional fitness hall, athletics arena and stadium) (SAR, p. 154). The athletic rooms and the stadium are not available in the winter period, but infrastructure is rented elsewhere in the city (Tour of the RSU LASE facilities).

Second, there are two well-equipped research units: the Sports Science Research Laboratory, and the Health Sports Research Centre. These units are the results of funding from the European Regional Development Fund, the state budget, and RSU LASE itself. The labs are available for staff and students to carry out research.

The expert team was impressed with the equipment that is available. The lab equipment is up to date, both the fixed and mobile material, in the different significant areas of sports education research. The materials allow RSU LASE members to conduct innovative research, namely in the field of Biomechanics, Physiology and Psychology (force platforms, EMG, kinematic analysis apparatus, balance analysis equipment, ergometers of different types, cardiorespiratory assessment equipment, reaction time facilities, among others from daily basis work) (Tour of the RSU LASE

facilities).

Both students and staff can use specialized lecture halls and sport halls, suited for both theoretical and practical classes in a variety of sport games, gyms and soft-surface halls. The equipment required for the sub-programmes can be tailored to specific sports disciplines that are common in compulsory education, as well as for working with special educational needs individuals, also taking into account the safe organisation of physical activities. Next, specialized equipment is required for the acquisition of national defence education content, which is provided through cooperation with the National Defence Youth Organisation Centre.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.

The financial resources were provided by the state budget funding for study places (42%) and fees for study places (58%). The main source of funding is the tuition fee (financed by private individuals or legal entities) and state budget funding for the study places (no additional state budget funding was foreseen for this new professional bachelor programme). The study programme is to be funded by private and legal entities, with a tuition fee of 2500 EUR for the 2024 intake (SAR, p. 156).

RSU plans to allocate to RSU LASE up to 18 study places each academic year from the existing professional bachelor's study programme 'Sport Science'. In the SAR (p. 156), no detailed cost accounting has been carried out for the study programme, and the calculations are based on the level of the implementation units, thus the costs are an average for all sub-programmes.

Figure 2 (SAR, p. 142) presents the student statistics for the Health, Physical Activity and Security study programme. In the first admission (2022-2023), 25 students enrolled in the study programme, opting for the sub-programme 'Sports and Health Teacher and Health and National Defence Teacher'. In the current academic year, there are 72 students in the first year and 23 in the second year of study. Thus the number of students shows an upward trend.

The study programme did not specify the minimum number of students required to maintain its financial viability.

No expenditure is foreseen for the development of the study programme until it is cost-effective.

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

Since July 1st, 2024, LASE has become a structural unit of RSU, granting students and staff access to RSU's scientific, informational, material, and technical resources. This integration enhances academic and research opportunities.

The RSU LASE Sports Brands Library is now part of the RSU library system; however, its book collection is outdated and less accessible due to limited opening hours and the absence of a self-return service. Improvements are needed to align it with RSU library standards.

While most study facilities at RSU LASE are equipped with modern technologies, further upgrades are necessary to fully meet contemporary academic and research demands, as observed during the tour of the facilities.

RSU LASE benefits from well-equipped sports facilities and two advanced research units: the Sports Science Research Laboratory and the Health Sports Research Centre. These facilities support high-quality research and account for the specific needs of the sub-programmes.

The financial resources were provided by the state budget funding for study places (42%) and fees for study places (58%). The main source of funding is the tuition fee and the state budget funding for the study places. The programme is to be funded by private and legal entities, with a tuition fee of 2500 EUR for the 2024 intake.

Strengths:

- 1) Since July 1st 2024, students and staff have access to the vast collection of physical and e-resources of the RSU Library.
- 2) There are well-equipped sports facilities and two very advanced research units: the Sports Science Research Laboratory, and the Health Sports Research Centre.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The vast book collection of RSU LASE library looks rather outdated and contains several old books.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, including informational resources (library), material and technical support, and financial resources, fully meets the necessary conditions for study programme's implementation and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes.

The evaluation of study programme resources remains unaffected, as students and staff, in addition to accessing older books, also have access to the RSU main library and a wide range of journal articles. In modern learning environments, books as a resource have become comparatively less significant than in the past.

Moreover, since the consolidation process is in its initial phase, the weaknesses identified relate to the current situation. What was observed and discussed during the visit shows that everything is in the process of development - renovations of premises, financial planning, student involvement in the RSU Student Union, etc. The observations of experts give confidence that the weaknesses have the potential to be improved.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

The qualifications of the teaching staff involved in the first cycle (professional bachelor) SP "Health, Physical Activity and Security" are appropriate in both academic and practical terms. The teaching staff is composed of experienced academic staff and people from the field of sport education. The academic staff with high academic degrees teach mainly theoretical study courses whereas teachers with extensive experience and achievements in sport education or sport teach practical courses. Students could acquire both theoretical and practical knowledge to enter more successfully into the labour market.

According to SAR (p. 157, and Annex 24.7), 55 academic staff are involved in the implementation of the first cycle (professional bachelor)SP "Health, Physical Activity and Security", 40 of whom have been elected to RSU academic positions. Of the 40 elected academic staff representatives, 7 are professors, 11 are associate professors, 12 are assistant professors, 7 are lecturers and 3 are leading researchers.

The qualifications of the teaching staff meet the requirements of laws and regulations, as 73% of the academic staff involved in the study programme have a doctoral degree and the proportion of elected teaching staff is 73% (SAR, p. 159, and Annex 24.7). Considering only the 40 staff members elected to RSU academic positions, 30 of them hold a doctoral degree (75%).

The elected academic staff members also carry out research work in the field, participating in some

funded research projects, or by carrying out research related to the study process, funded by the faculty, national study and science base funding, including the participation in several conferences and seminars and the publication of scientific articles. In fact, the qualification of the teaching staff members (e.g., academic qualifications, participation in pedagogical projects, professional background) enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. However, the presence of foreign lectures, even in a remote mode, could increase the quality and diversity of the study programme.

2.4.2.

As the study programme was licensed in 2022, there have been no significant changes in the composition of teaching staff during the reporting period that would affect the quality of the study programme. The data on the lecturers involved in the study programme indicate that there have been no significant changes in the composition of the teaching staff during the review period, despite the fact that during the reorganisation with RSU, 8% of lecturers did not continue their employment (SAR, pp. 159-160).

The study programme presents stability in employment, as 85% of the staff are full-time lecturers, which in turn indicates the long-term capacity of the study programme and its independence from external resources. Meanwhile, invited lecturers provide additional expertise and flexibility in the implementation of the programme.

In summary, RSU takes measures so that changes in the composition of the teaching staff do not negatively affect the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.

There is a good connection between the scientific research and the study process, especially under the courses that support the “Education and Pedagogy” field and this study programme. Study courses included in the study programmes are related to the research areas of the teaching staff, especially considering the interdisciplinary focus of the interventions and the activity of the elected academic staff.

There are some projects and publications carried out by the teaching staff and researchers involved in the study field, including publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus (SAR, Annex 6.4 and 6.5). Research in the fields of Education and Pedagogy is carried out in close cooperation with several research fields, developing scientific and applied research. Overall, these research outputs are positive, highlighting the effort of the teaching staff and the RSU board to develop and improve the research activities.

Despite the difficulties and constraints to be involved in granted projects reported during the assessment visit by the teaching staff, the lecturers of the Bachelor SP “Health, Physical Activity and Security” participate in some research projects and publish their work at international seminars and in scientific journals. However, there are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with the study programme (e.g., Medical Sciences, Epidemiology, Pharmacology). Furthermore, the strategy of the University should consider reinforcing the publications as original research in the most prestigious journals in the field of “Education and Pedagogy” related to this study programme.

The teaching staff members present several years of practical experience in the field, which is more significant regarding the staff who work mainly at different institutions rather than RSU (guest lectures). As it can be observed in the SAR (Annex 24.7) and in the curriculum vitae presented by each staff member several teachers are high-level professionals in their respective field which

significantly enhances the quality of the Bachelor SP “Health, Physical Activity and Security”.

2.4.5. Cooperation between teaching staff is facilitated through meetings, during which the study programme director and the director of the study field inform them of the desired course of action. The study programme director organises meetings with the Programme teaching staff as necessary to improve the content of the study programme and ensure interconnection. Teaching staff are involved in the coursework and placement defence committees, listening to the work done by students and thus clearly identifying weaknesses in student knowledge, skills and competences. Teaching staff regularly improve the content of their study courses and update the e-learning materials (SAR, p. 161).

The teaching staff of the study programme collaborate in preparing study course descriptions and working in research and projects. In-depth mapping of study courses is carried out and lecture and class observation is organized. Furthermore, the teaching staff join together to carry out research under the guidance of the research direction coordinator, work together on study of the identified subject matter and the compilation of their results, on preparation of publications and reports. To foster cooperation between teaching staff in the organised professional development activities, international events and informal events, setting and completion of joint tasks is promoted by the board. Although these procedures are of great importance, it would be important to define a more detailed plan to coordinate all these pedagogical and scientific activities.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff members enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. The research outputs are overall positive, highlighting the effort of the teaching staff and the RSU board to develop and improve the research activities. Nevertheless, there are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with the study programme. Moreover, the mechanisms for mutual cooperation of the teaching staff in the implementation of the study programme has been established.

Strengths:

1. The qualification of the teaching staff members, including both academic staff and teachers with experience in the field.
2. The teaching staff members present several years of practical experience in the field.
4. There are some positive research outputs.

Weaknesses:

1. There are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with the study programme.
2. No foreign lecturers, even in a remote mode.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The qualification (education, experience in the field) of the teaching staff members and the research outputs enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the first cycle (professional bachelor) study programme “Health, Physical Activity and Security” and the relevant study courses.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

SAR Annex 17.1 (“17.1_Anx_Compliance_Nat_Stand.pdf”) and the corresponding SAR Annex 19 (“19_Anx_Study_Plan_VFAD.pdf”) confirms that the first cycle (professional bachelor) study programme complies with Cabinet of Ministers’ Regulation No. 305 “Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās augstākās izglītības standartu”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

SAR Annex 18.2 (“18.2_Anx_VFAD_Mapping_Prof_Standard.pdf”) confirms that the sub-programmes “Sport and Health Teacher” and “Sport, Health and National Defence Teacher” mostly comply with the Teacher professional standard, corresponding to the level 6 LQF (approved on June 12, 2020). However, it remains unclear whether Personal data protection, Professional terminology in national language (both required according to the Teacher professional standard) and foreign language training (at the level required by the Teacher professional standard), are covered by the study programme. Section 2.2.1 of this report presents a detailed analysis and a summary of the deficiencies.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The provided study course descriptions (SAR Annex 20.1 “20.1_Anx_Course_descrip_VFAD.pdf”) are prepared in Latvian. The study course descriptions include most of the requirements defined by the Law on Higher Education Institutions. It was noted that the total number of working hours applicable to each course, as well as a breakdown of hours also designated for the exam and student independent work, is not included within the respective study course description. This omission results in an incomplete presentation of the organization of student independent work. Furthermore, it is recommended that each study course description include a designation of its placement within the study programme (part A, B or C).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The provided Diploma sample (SAR Annex 24.1 “24.1_Anx_Diploma_diploma_supplement.pdf”

and the corrected supplement “Pap24.1.2_piel_Diploma_pielik_VFAD_SpoVesSkol_LV_ENG”) conforms to the procedure for issuing state-recognised higher education documents as outlined in Cabinet of Ministers’ Regulation No. 202 “Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

RSU confirmation letter 19.07.2024 Nr.3-DPAD-6/382/2024 (SAR Annex 24.4, “Certification Regarding the Knowledge of Latvian”) verifies that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet of Ministers’ Regulation No. 157 (Adopted 8 March 2022) “Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language”; however, the attached resumes of staff (SAR Annex 6.2) reveal that one teaching staff member (professor involved in conducting study courses “Gymnastic basics and methodology”, “Rhythmic and rhythmic combinations” and “Dance art”) holds a B1 level in Latvian writing. According to Cabinet Regulation No. 157, the minimum required level of Latvian proficiency for teaching staff is C1.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The attached sample form of a general study agreement (SAR Annex 24.6. “24.6_pielikums_Stud_liguma_paraugs.pdf”) includes all the requirements stipulated in Cabinet of Ministers’ Regulation No. 70 “Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The attached confirmation letter to Academic Information Centre (SAR Annex 24.1 "24.1_piel_vienosanas_stud_turp.pdf") confirms that RSU provides the possibility to continue studies within the RSU professional Bachelor's study programme "Sports Science".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

RSU 19.07.2024. confirmation letter No. 3-DPAD-6/383/2024 to foundation "Academic Information Centre" states, that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme fails to be accredited or the licence of the study programme is withdrawn due to the actions or inactions of the university and the student does not wish to continue their studies in another study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

SAR Annex 17.2 ("17.2_Anx_Compliance_Spec_Reg_Framework.pdf") confirms that the study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No. 569 "Noteikumi par pedagogiem nepieciešamo izglītību un profesionālo kvalifikāciju un pedagogu profesionālās kompetences pilnveides kārtību".

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study programme complies with most regulatory requirements. To ensure full compliance, the study programme's content should be assessed for full alignment with the Teacher professional standard, corresponding to the level 6 LQF. Additionally, it should be ensured that all teaching staff members possess proficiency in Latvian at the minimum required level of C1, as stipulated in Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No. 157. Furthermore, the identified discrepancies in the study course descriptions should be corrected to ensure full compliance. Specifically, descriptions should include the total working hours for each course and a breakdown of hours designated also for the exam and student independent work.

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

The first cycle study programme "Health, Physical Activity and Security" (42141) and its two sub-programmes - "Sports and Health Teacher" and "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" aligns with the aims of the study field "Education and Pedagogy" and the title, the goals of the study programme and the gained professional qualification and its requirements are all interrelated. The learning outcomes are related to the needs of the region and aligned with labor market demands and address shortages in sports and educational sectors, as well as the urgent need for national defense education teachers and sports teachers in Latvia.

According to the experts' opinion, there are no deficiencies identified that cannot be eliminated during the 2-year accreditation period. There are no obstacles to implement the study programme in declared form as full-time and part-time studies in Latvian with a different study duration for each sub-programme that is substantiated in the SAR and during the site visit:

- 1) sub-programme "Sports and Health Teacher" - 4 years full-time and 4 years, 6 months part-time studies;
- 2) sub-programme "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" - 4 years, 8 months full-time and 5 years, 6 months part-time studies.

The place of implementation - RSU LASE, located in Riga, is well-equipped with sports facilities and two advanced research units: the Sports Science Research Laboratory and the Health Sports Research Centre that support high-quality research and account for the specific needs of the study programme and its sub-programmes.

The study provision, including informational resources (library), material and technical support, and financial resources, fully meets the necessary conditions for programme implementation and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes.

The first cycle study programme "Health, Physical Activity and Security" complies with most regulatory requirements. To ensure full compliance, the study programme's content should be assessed for full alignment with the Teacher professional standard, corresponding to the level 6 LQF. The qualification of the teaching staff members and the research outputs enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the first cycle study programme "Health, Physical Activity and Security" and the relevant study courses. However, it should be ensured that all teaching staff members possess proficiency in Latvian at the minimum required level of C1, as stipulated in Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No. 157.

Among the most important strengths the experts have identified the following aspects:

- 1) The sub-programmes "Sports and Health Teacher" and "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" address the specific professional needs of teachers and align with labor market demands, thus enhancing the sector's competitiveness and contributing to Latvia's economic and social development by integrating young specialists into the labor market.
- 2) The qualification of the teaching staff members, including both academic staff and teachers with experience in the field.
- 3) The teaching staff members present several years of practical experience in the field.
- 4) Well planned placement structure.
- 5) An opportunity for individual study approach (aligned with the training and competition schedule) for students who are also high performance athletes.

Based on the available information in SAR and from the site visit, there were identified weaknesses that have the most significant impact on the quality of the study programme:

- 1) The study programme's content is not fully aligned with the Teacher professional standard, corresponding to the level 6 LQF.
- 2) There are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with the study programme.

- 3) No foreign lecturers, even in a remote mode.
- 4) There is a need to incorporate Sport Ethics and Integrity, as well as Academic Integrity and Research Ethics topics in already existing study courses for both sub-programmes of this study programme.
- 5) In order to promote student-centered learning, stop offering students topics for qualification papers and incorporate in the study process teaching how to define research gaps and find an area of research that interests students themselves.

Evaluation of the study programme "Health, Physical Activity and Security"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Health, Physical Activity and Security"

Short-term recommendations

1) Until the study field is submitted for accreditation, evaluate the study programme's content to ensure alignment with the Teacher professional standard, corresponding to the level 6 LQF. To achieve full alignment, incorporate the following topics in the curriculum: Personal data protection and Professional terminology in national language; and ensure that the foreign language training is provided at the level required by Teacher professional standard, corresponding to the level 6 LQF.

2) Within the next year, review the study course descriptions, and supplement them with the total working hours applicable to each course, providing a clear breakdown of hours designated for the exam, student independent work, and lectures/seminars, to ensure compliance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and to improve student understanding of the expected workload for their independent study. Additionally, it is recommended to include an indication within each study course description of its placement within the study programme (Part A, B, or C).

3) Within the next year, review and revise the literature listed in course descriptions to ensure it includes the most recent and relevant publications.

4) Within the next year, review and revise the assessment criteria within study course descriptions to better align with stated learning outcomes and student competencies. Remove attendance as an assessment criterion, as it does not provide an accurate or meaningful measure of these elements and consider implementing alternative assessment methods that more effectively evaluate student learning outcomes and competence.

Long-term recommendations

1) Incorporate more actively the teaching staff members of this study programme in scientific projects to overcome the differences in the research outputs among teaching staff members.

2) Assess the current duration of the sub-programme "Sports, Health and National Defence Teacher" to ensure it is aligned with the needs and expectations of prospective students.

3) Until the next accreditation process, attract at least 3 foreign lecturers from abroad (teaching abroad or in-person).

4) Update and modernize the RSU LASE library's book collection by acquiring recent books and replacing outdated materials within two years.

5) Incorporate Sport Ethics and Integrity, as well as Academic Integrity and Research Ethics topics in already existing study courses for all sub-programmes of this study programme.

6) In order to promote student-centered learning, stop offering students topics for qualification papers and incorporate in the study process teaching how to define research gaps and find an area of research that interests students themselves.

8) Review attendance as an assessment criterion for study courses (e.g., Business and Accounting).

II - "Supervision" ASSESSMENT

II - "Supervision" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

According to SAR (p. 107) and the information from the site visit, the second cycle (professional master) study programme "Supervision" had been implemented in StF "Education, Pedagogy and Sports". Before the consolidation with LASE, it was evaluated within the RSU study field "Health Care" (July 2023 - February 2024) and rejected by evaluation experts due to the risks related to the study programme's insufficient alignment with the "Health Care" study field. The initiative arose to move the study programme to the StF "Education and Pedagogy" (SAR p. 98). Justification of this change is given in the SAR (p. 108) and based on the conversation with the study programme director during the onsite visit, the study programme was characterized as interdisciplinary and related to pedagogy, health care, management science, and psychology in consultation.

The second cycle (professional master) study programme "Supervision" complies with the study field "Education and Pedagogy", as it addresses dilemmas related to professional issues, ensures life-long learning and provides advisory and educational support to individuals and groups (SAR p. 108). The aim of the study programme is "to ensure professional studies that are theoretically well-grounded and can be applied in practice to prepare highly skilled supervisors, who could compete in the changing socio-economic conditions and the international labour market" (SAR, p. 109). It ensures the compliance with the aim of the study field, which is "to prepare qualified specialists for work in educational and pedagogical environments" (SAR, p. 25).

2.1.2.

The study programme is a second-cycle (professional master) study programme developed according to the professional higher education standard (SAR Annex 17.1), the Latvian Qualifications Framework level 7 competencies (available only in Latvian - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba%20classification>) and the Supervisor's profession standard requirements (SAR Annex 18.2) and partly with the guidelines of the Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe (ANSE), as stated in SAR (p. 109).

Student admission is in accordance with the Admission Regulations approved by the RSU Senate for the respective academic year. Applicants of the study programme "Supervision" are admitted according to competition results formed by weighted average grade in the diploma and results of the entrance examination: structured interview to learn about the work experience and understanding of supervision. Although there is compliance with the requirements for the

educational programme defined by ANSE (<https://anse.eu/about-anse/standards>), the admission requirement in terms of previous professional experience of 4 years after graduation, is not met. After the submission of additional documents experts requested during the visit, the proof of compliance with the Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe guidelines and standards is presented in Annex Pap26. Regarding the discrepancy in terms of previous professional experience, an explanation has been provided that the National Organisation (in this case - the Latvian Association of Supervisors) may specify exceptions or additional requirements.

The second cycle (professional master) study programme "Supervision" is implemented in full-time studies with a duration of 2 years, which complies with Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 322 "Regulations on Latvian Classification of Education". The competencies set as expected results are both in line with the aim of the study field, as well as the Supervisor's professional standard requirements. Mapping of the outcomes is revealed in SAR Annex 18.1., and compliance with the standard of the profession - in SAR Annex 18.2.

SAR Section 3.1.2 (p. 108-111) describes the interrelation of the objectives, tasks, and content of the study programme. It is emphasized in SAR and was discussed at an onsite visit with the study programme director and academic staff, that there is no bachelor level study programme for obtaining the qualification of a supervisor. Therefore, students who make their decision to continue their bachelor studies and become supervisors come from different fields - pedagogy, health care, social welfare, etc. Because of that, the study programme provides a general introduction to adult pedagogy and supervision.

The name of the study programme retains an internationally used term "supervision" (in English) that means "advisory and educational support received by an individual, group or organisation in a professional context to improve their professional competence, professional performance quality, and foster professional growth" (SAR, p. 108). The code of the study programme - 47 142 that reflects second level higher education - professional Master's study programme and classification in Teacher education (CM Regulations No. 322 "Regulations on the Latvian Education Classification").

2.1.3.

SAR reports several important changes made in the second cycle (professional master) study programme "Supervision" during the reporting period (SAR, Table 1, p. 105):

- Changed to the study field "Education and Pedagogy",
- Admission requirements amended to include required work experience.

Another significant change is because of the centralised switch from the national to the international (ECTS) credit system. As a result, the alignment of all study course credits to the ECTS requirements has been implemented, as set out in the RSU Study Process Development Plan for Social Sciences and Health Studies, approved at the Senate meeting on 13 February and 12 March 2024 (SAR Annex 4.1). The transition to the new credit system is addressed in the guidelines "Transition to the new credit system. Recommendations for study programme directors and course leaders" (see SAR Annex 28).

However, the changes for inclusion in the study field "Education and Pedagogy" have not been analysed by RSU. The compliance with the aforementioned study field is provided in the SAR, but the reasons underlying these changes are not revealed.

Also, there is no analysis in additional documents that were provided by RSU to experts regarding the professional experience needed before the studies and the reason why the National Organisation (the Latvian Association of Supervisors) has made exceptions in this regard (the guidelines of the Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe suggest 4 years prior experience).

The confusion was caused by what was heard during an onsite meeting with the study programme director - due to the transition to another study field, changes to the content of the study courses would still be made. This indicates that the content of study courses needs to be reviewed following the transition to the study field "Education and Pedagogy".

2.1.4.

The issues regarding the economic and social justification of the study programme were discussed with the RSU management, the study programme director, and the head of the study field, and the main aspects are presented in the SAR (Section 3.1.3, p. 111-112).

According to the SAR, the history of the development of the profession dates to 2014, when it was strengthened as an independent profession and included in the Classification of Professions. The supervisor's professional standard was revised in 2019 in cooperation with the Latvian Association of Supervisors and three higher education institutions – RSU, RISEBA, and Christian Academy. Several projects in the educational environment prove the necessity of the supervisors. Also, the impact of COVID-19 demands qualified specialists to provide psycho-emotional support, mitigate burnout risks, and teach self-help and self-management techniques and approaches to teachers and other professionals in the business and public sector.

When describing the dynamics of the number of students (SAR, Section 3.1.4), it should be noted that the study programme has not been opened since 2022 because of a lack of students. The number of students set by the university is 24 (p. 113), therefore, the dynamics of admitted students presented within the scope of the years 2016 to 2022 is not satisfactory - the number of students ranges from 4 in 2020 to 18 in 2021 (SAR Annex 16). Also, a dropout rate is high - about a third of students. Among the most often mentioned reasons are the inability to combine work, private life and study load (SAR p. 98).

The employment indicators of the graduates of the study programme are positive as the need for supervision was recognised and integrated into the law, for example, in the social work sector and public administration. According to the information provided by SAR and from the on-site meeting with the programme director, supervision becomes a demanded service especially after COVID-19 pandemic, as well as in the frame of projects and in an educational environment (p. 112).

SAR gives insight into some of the activities that are planned to attract students, however, they are very general, like RSU publicity channels and sending information about admission to professional organisations. do not create confidence that a group of students will be admitted. It is important to note that the study programme is not listed on the RSU website under prospective master's study programmes. For long-term student attraction, it is important that the study programme is featured on the website. Prospective students often make application decisions years in advance, and having accessible information about available study programmes can significantly influence their choices.

2.1.5. N/A

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

The second-cycle (professional master) study programme “Supervision” complies with the study field “Education and Pedagogy”. It was developed according to the professional higher education standard, the Latvian Qualifications Framework level 7 competencies, the Supervisor's professional standard requirements, and with the guidelines of the Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe, except the condition regarding the professional experience needed before the studies. The explanation provided by the RSU does not explain why the National Organisation (the Latvian Association of Supervisors) has made exceptions in this regard. Also, the reasons for the change to the study field “Education and Pedagogy” have not been analysed.

Since there is no first-cycle study programme for obtaining a supervisor's qualification in Latvia, this second-cycle study programme allows obtaining a supervisor's qualification. The competencies set as expected results are in line with the aim of the study field and the Supervisor's professional standard requirements.

The profession of a supervisor as an independent profession in 2014 was included in the Classification of Professions. There is a demand for qualified specialists to provide psycho-emotional

support, mitigate burnout risks, and teach self-help and self-management techniques and approaches to teachers and other professionals in the social work, public, and education sectors. The study programme has not been opened since 2022 and SAR shows that the dynamics of admitted students presented within the scope of the years 2016 to 2022 are not satisfactory. Efficient measures have to be taken to attract students and reduce the drop-out rate. SAR gives insight into some of the activities planned to attract students, however, they are very general and do not create confidence that a group of students will be admitted.

Strengths:

- 1) There is no first cycle (bachelor) study programme in Latvia for obtaining the qualification of a supervisor. Students who decide to continue their studies at the master level and acquire the qualification of a supervisor come from different fields – pedagogy, health care, social welfare, etc. Because of that, the study programme provides a general introduction to adult pedagogy and supervision.
- 2) There is a demand for qualified specialists to provide psycho-emotional support, mitigate burnout risks, and teach self-help and self-management techniques and approaches to teachers and other professionals in the business, governmental, and public sectors.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The amendments regarding the change to the study field “Education and Pedagogy” have not been analysed by RSU and the reasons underlying these changes are not revealed.
- 2) There is no analysis in additional documents experts were provided by RSU regarding the professional experience needed before the studies and why the National Organisation (the Latvian Association of Supervisors) has made exceptions (the guidelines of the Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe suggest 4 years prior experience).
- 3) No students in the study programme “Supervision”.
- 4) The activities planned to attract students are very general and do not create confidence that a group of students will be admitted. It is important to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these activities as the study programme has had no students since 2022.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

As indicated in SAR 3.1.3., the need for supervisions was recognised and integrated in the National law even before the creation of the profession “Supervision”, however since 2014 the profession “Supervisor/consultant” has also been included in the Classification of Professions. The Professional Standard was revised and improved in 2019 by a group formed of Latvian Association of Supervisors, RSU, RISEBA and the Christian Academy. As written in SAR 3.1.3., but also heard in the onsite visit at RSU, in the last decade the accessibility and the general understanding of what supervision is and how it can assist in the professional and personal improvement has gradually increased in both public and private sectors. Based on the SAR and the onsite visit it is more than clear that the job opportunities and labour market needs for a professional with a “Supervision” degree are vast.

It was said during the on-site visit that since the transition to the study field “Education and Pedagogy”, the content of the study programme has not been reviewed yet. It is recommended by the experts to do it as soon as possible. The study course mapping (Annex 18.1.) clearly shows how generally the content of study courses contribute to the learning outcomes of the study course and the overall aims of the study programme. According to Annex 18.1. of the SAR there are several courses contributing to each of seven aims of the study programme. The study course mapping is

well crafted and user friendly, thus making the coherence and the synergy of the content, study course learning objectives and the study programme aims well understandable. Meetings with the management of the study programme and the academic staff during the site visit convinced the experts that the study courses in this study programme are chosen and taught by experts many of whom apart from having academic positions also have a vast experience in the industry.

Having said all that, a more in-depth review of study course descriptions revealed a lack of detail regarding the organization and assignments for students' independent work (e.g., Self-Efficacy and Self-Regulation, SAR Annex 20.1). Furthermore, some course descriptions were vague or lacked the evaluation criteria of learning outcomes (e.g., Research Data Analysis, Supervision of Teams and Organisations, SAR Annex 20.1). Additionally, the total number of working hours for each course, including a breakdown of hours allocated to the exam and students' independent work, is missing from the respective study course descriptions. These deficiencies indicate non-compliance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, which mandates that study course descriptions should describe the organisation and tasks for the independent work of students and determine the evaluation criteria of learning outcomes. Additionally, this omission hinders students' ability to understand the organization of their independent work. It is also recommended that each study course description indicates its placement within the study programme (Part A, B or C).

What is more, not having formed a full group of students since 2022 casts a shadow of doubt about the reasons for this situation, potentially some of them also being connected to the content of the study courses. It has been observed that the vast majority of the study courses are closely interconnected with the profession, nevertheless the study programme is still implemented at a university setting, hence a better balance between professional and academic study courses is suggested (see more in chapter 2.2.2. of this report). Also, during the onsite visit the experts heard from the director of the study programme that it is still necessary to make adjustments in the content of study courses due to the transition to the study direction "Education and pedagogy". Another observation that was made looking at the Study Course descriptions (SAR Annex 20.1.) was the overwhelming amount of literature suggested by author K. Mārtinsone who also happens to be the lead for a lot of the study courses. While it is understandable that contributions of some authors (especially in Latvian language) might be significant in a specific field, it would be recommended to also look for alternative options for required and recommended literature to avoid the situation where one expert's work is being held in a position of high praise and that expert is at the same time also one's professor.

As indicated in SAR Annex 17.1. the Professional Master's study programme "Supervision" is in compliance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 305. The study programme as well is compliant with the occupational standard (SAR Annex 18.2.), and during the onsite visit it was found out that the Professional Standard for the profession "Supervisor" is developed in accordance with ANSE (the Association of National Organisations for Supervision and Coaching in Europe) standards.

2.2.2.

Study programme "Supervision" is a second cycle (professional master) study programme, hence the majority of the study courses are directly connected to the practical aspects of the profession, nevertheless as indicated in SAR Annex 19 (Study Plan) students in this study programme have mandatory study courses Research Methodology, Research Data Analysis and Master Thesis. Even taking into account that the study programme is a second cycle (professional master) study programme, students of this study programme are expected to write their master's thesis and, given this requirement, it is surprising that none of the aforementioned science related study courses cover such an important topic as Academic Integrity. All in all, it seems that there should be a better balance found between the scientific and the professional part of the study programme as upon successful graduation, students are conducting research and being awarded a master's degree.

2.2.3.

Courses of the study programme “Supervision” are delivered via diverse implementation methods: lectures, tutorials, independent work and 4 placements. Great emphasis is placed on individual independent work, independent work of teams as well as interactive methods, including the use of digital tools. Study courses are delivered both in-person and online. According to Article 1(8) of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, one credit point corresponds to 25-30 hours of study work (SAR section 3.2.3.), nevertheless the Higher Education Institution should define the number of hours precisely, instead of presenting a range of hours for 1 credit point.

Interactive teaching methods like discussions, case studies, role playing, cooperative learning, project development, presentation and others are utilized to develop student’s professional knowledge and skills. Student-centred learning methods are applied according to the aims, learning outcomes, expected study programme results and also to the specifics of each study course. Goals of the chosen methods are to develop critical thinking, problem solution, application of theoretical knowledge, planning of future development, decision making and the ability to solve problems and work both in teams and individually (SAR section 3.2.3.).

Study programmes “Supervision” students are given opportunities to attend conferences in RSU and when doing so they are given specific tasks within the study courses which are linked to the learning outcomes of each particular study course (SAR section 3.2.3.). This approach is commendable as it is not only yet another interactive method of learning, but also provides students to develop and maintain an academic and professional network, which, as learned during the site visit, plays an important role in the acquisition of one’s own client base later on.

All study course materials (video recordings, presentations, list of mandatory and recommended readings, list of other useful resources), information on the format of the study course, tutorial times, examination times, assessment criteria, links to RSU repository are available in the E-learning environment (SAR 3.2.3.). It has to be noted that mandatory and recommended readings should be updated with the most recent sources.

Personalized, creative and innovative approaches are implemented, allowing students to select the research topics that are of interest to them and also in the way that assessments are presented. In SAR 3.2.3. it is mentioned: “writing lessons learnt from a conference as a poem or singing as a song”, however it is not clear how the consistency of applying the assessment criteria for such a flexible approach of presenting assessments can then be maintained.

Forms of independent work are diverse and contemporary. Among others some of the assessments mentioned in SAR 3.2.3. are creating a blog about supervision and interviewing working supervisors. As indicated in SAR 3.2.3., the majority of the study courses have a cumulative assessment system, ensuring a sequential and continuous learning complemented by the feedback of the lecturer. Along with the assessment of students, examinations also serve as an important way of introducing students to the appropriate knowledge and skills necessary to be a supervisor. Individual feedback from students is sought at the end of the 1st year as well as in 4th semester after the examination of Placement 4.

To conclude, based on the SAR and the conversations held at the meetings during the site visit, it seems that massive work has been invested to plan, design and improve the existing study programme. As presented, learning in this study programme is student-centered and provides students with a multitude of opportunities to express their individuality and creativity. Last thing to be added is that with having such a flexible approach in presenting the assessments, a clear and concise explanation of how the assessment criteria are applied for different types of presentations is a must.

2.2.4.

According to SAR Annex 9 (Organisation of Student Placements) in total 4 placements (2 placements and 2 clinical placements) are mandatory to be completed in master’s study programme

“Supervision” (in total 42 ECTS). These placements are implemented in accordance with the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No 305 “Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education”. In SAR Annex 9 it is stated that the organisation for the placement is chosen by the student, nevertheless, in the case of difficulty to find a placement organisation, the Director of the study programme helps to find it and signs a tripartite agreement. In SAR Annex 9.2. institutions with whom RSU has had placement agreements are presented and the list consists of both public institutions and private organisations. At the very end of Annex 9.2. a list of organisations are indicated where former students have done their placements. It is important to acknowledge that institutions and organisations where students have done their placements are various and located in different areas of Latvia, such as, for example, SCEI “Naukšēni”; Sigulda City Secondary School, Talsi Municipality Social Services and Red Cross. The conversations held with graduates indicated that their experience with placements during the study process have been positive and The Description of the Organisation of Student Placements (SAR Annex 9) also indicates that placements are organized effectively and align well with the learning outcomes that are achievable (and for each placement presented in SAR Annex 20.1. (Course Description)).

SAR (p.26) states that “students of the second-cycle study programme “Supervision” provide consultations (supervisions) to bachelor’s students as part of their placement”. To the opinion of experts, such practice-based cooperation is very valuable, however, such practice tasks are not found in either the second-cycle study programme “Supervision” (20.1_Anx_Course_Descrip_Supervision), or the first-cycle study programme “Health, Physical Activity, and Security” (20.1_Anx_Course_descrip_VFAD). It would be necessary to clearly state such a form of cooperation in the course descriptions.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.

According to the SAR Annex 22 (Topics for Student Final Papers) topics of student master theses are relevant to the study field and correspond well with the study programme “Supervision”. Moreover, the topics of student master theses are relevant also to the ongoing changes in the education system of Latvia (e.g. “Supervision experience in developing teachers professional competency of the “Iespējamā Misija” organisation”), to the current labour market specifics (e.g. “Use of information technology in telesupervision: data security”) and current geopolitical situation in the world (e.g. “Feedback on the supervision process and supervision needs for soldiers during the basic military training course”).

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

In conclusion, while the content of the study programme is topical, interconnected, complementary and corresponds well to the objectives of the study programme, ensuring that the learning outcomes, the needs of the industry, labour market and the scientific trends are met, there is a lack of important detail in some study course descriptions (for details please see section 2.2.1.), making them non-compliant with the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Majority of the study courses are well connected with the professional aspects of the “supervision” profession, nevertheless a master’s degree is awarded upon successful completion of the study programme, thus making experts suggest a better balance between academic oriented and professional oriented study courses. Massive work has been invested to plan, design and improve the existing study programme. Learning in this study programme is student-centered and provides students with a multitude of opportunities to express their individuality and creativity, nevertheless having such a flexible approach in presenting the assessments (e.g., in a form of a song or a poem), a clear and concise explanation of how the assessment criteria are applied for different types of presentations is

a must. The organisation of internships are effective, diverse and related to the learning outcomes and as well complies with the regulatory enactments. Topics of student master theses are relevant to the study field and correspond well with the study programme "Supervision".

Strengths:

- 1) The interdisciplinarity of the study programme and the potential for its students to do research in many disciplines and its graduates to work in many areas.
- 2) Four mandatory placements to gain plenty of professional experience already during the study process.
- 3) Study implementation methods are diverse, modern and encourage creativity and self-expression.

Weaknesses

- 1) The content of study courses has not been reviewed following the transition to the study field of "Education and Pedagogy".
- 2) A lack of detail in study course descriptions regarding assignments and students' independent work leading to non-compliance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions
- 3) Academic Integrity topic not covered in any of the science related study courses ("Research Methodology", "Research Data Analysis" or "Master Thesis").
- 4) Overwhelming presence of one professor's work for the required and recommended readings, also in the courses managed or led by the same professor.
- 5) A range of hours assigned to one credit point (25-30), instead of having a concrete number of hours assigned to one credit point.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Academic Integrity topic is not included in any of the science related study courses ("Research Methodology"; "Research Data Analysis" or "Master Thesis". Upon successful graduation, students are awarded a master's degree from a university, hence topic such as Academic Integrity are a must within the study programme.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

The general information about this criterion for study field level, that also applies for study programme, can be found in Chapter 1.3. of this report.

Specifically for this study programme, it can be mentioned that the available databases (EBSCO, Elsevier, McGraw-Hill, ProQuest, and SAGE Research Methods) (SAR, p. 122) include several e-books focusing on supervision.

In terms of 'technical' provision, and specifically for this Supervision programme, different methods have been purchased and are supplemented annually. For example, the educational game 'My Team Roles', associative cards 'Your world', a systemic consulting manual and the practical material 'Systemic consulting in Five Rounds', emoji cards 'Feeling, Sensations, Emotions', the card set 'Idea PITCH', personality growth cards '52 Steps Up', Design thinking toolkit, method-card set 'Motivation,

Values, Needs'.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.

It is planned to fund the study programme from private and legal entity funds setting the tuition fee at 2100 EUR per year of study, which will be increased to 2400 EUR in the subsequent years, considering the demand constraints. In recent years, no students have been admitted. There are no state budget places provided for this study programme either. Admission to the study programme will only resume if the necessary funding is found to cover the actual costs of the study programme, next to the tuition fee. The estimated tuition fee, without finding other funding sources, is 3600 EUR per year (SAR, p. 124).

The number of students planned to be achieved over two academic years is 25, with 13 students admitted in the first year, and the number of students remaining the same in the second year (SAR, p. 123). With the current projections for drop-out, it is not recommended to enroll fewer than 16 students.

It is unclear whether these estimated figures are feasible.

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

RSU provides appropriate, technically well-equipped classrooms. The RSU library meets nowadays standards. It is open from 8.30am to 7 pm on working days and from 10am to 5pm on Saturdays. Next to the vast collection and the access to several e-databases, the library offers other facilities that can support the learning process. E.g., computers are available, internet access, equipment for text-to-speech production, access to the e-learning environment.

In terms of technical provision, different methods for supervision have been purchased that can be used in the study Programme.

It is planned to fund the programme from private and legal entity funds setting the tuition fee at 2100 EUR per year of study, which will be increased to 2400 EUR in the subsequent years, considering the demand constraints. The estimated tuition fee, without finding other funding sources, is 3600 EUR. In recent years, no students have been admitted.

Strengths: See section 1.3. of the opinion.

Weaknesses:

1) There is a lot of uncertainty about the actual number of students that will enroll for the StP. Given the current drop-out projections, a minimum of 16 students should enroll in the first year, and at least 25 students should be reached over two years' time. It is unclear if these figures will be met.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study provision, including informational resources (library), material and technical support, and financial resources, partially meets the necessary conditions for the study programme implementation and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes, given the uncertainty to meet the projected number of students, as 16 students should enroll in the first year, but for the

past two years there has been no interest from students.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

According to SAR (p. 124), the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the second cycle (professional master) SP "Supervision" have the following qualification requirements: at least a Master's degree, but preferably a scientific doctoral degree in a science related to the course. Further, pedagogical work experience, digital skills, preferable scientific activity in the relevant field of science and practical work experience in supervision is also requested to work in this study programme.

According to SAR (p. 124-126, and Annex 24.7), 23 academic staff are involved in the implementation of the second cycle (professional master) SP "Supervision, 11 of whom have been elected to RSU academic positions. Of the 11 elected academic staff members, two are professors, two are associate professors, four are assistant professors, two are lecturers, and one is assistant (SAR, Annex 24.7).

The qualifications of the teaching staff meet the requirements of laws and regulations. Regarding the 23 teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme, 11 of them hold a doctoral degree and, of the 11 elected academic staff representatives, 9 of those hold a doctoral degree (SAR, Annex 24.7). Moreover, there are 3 staff members enrolled for this degree and the others hold a scientific Master's degree. Almost half (10) of the lecturers involved in the implementation of the programme are also certified supervisors (Latvian Association of Supervisors) and practise the profession on a daily basis (SAR, p. 124).

The elected academic staff members also carry out research work in the field, participating in some funded research projects, or by carrying out research related to the study process, funded by the faculty, national study and science base funding, including the participation in several conferences and seminars and the publication of scientific articles. In fact, the qualification of the teaching staff members (e.g., academic qualifications, participation in pedagogical projects, professional background) enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. However, the presence of foreign lectures, even in a remote mode, could increase the quality and diversity of the programme.

Moreover, it is important to notice that, as mentioned during the assessment visit, the information is not always the same in the documents regarding the teaching staff data (SAR, pp. 124-126; Annex 24.7_Anx_Acad_Staff_Statistics-2.pdf; 24.7_Anx_Acad_Staff_Statistics_Supervision.pdf).

2.4.2.

RSU takes measures so that changes in the composition of the teaching staff do not negatively affect the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments.

There have been no significant changes in the composition of teaching staff during the reporting period that would affect the quality of the study programme (SAR, p. 127). However, according to the interviews during the assessment visit, as the study programme has not been effectively conducted and at this moment there are no students in the study programme, this analysis is not fully developed.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.

Study courses included in the study programme are related to the research areas of the teaching

staff, especially considering the interdisciplinary focus of the interventions and the activity of the elected academic staff.

The professional experience of the teaching staff is very positive, with very good background on different professional contexts under the scope of this study programme.

According to SAR (Annex 6.4), the lecturers involved in the study programme present 461 publications entered in the RSU Scientific Activity Information System (ZDIS) Pure from 2013 to 2024, including publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus. There are 18 lecturers with at least one publication, and some with a significant curriculum regarding publications outputs (e.g., 139; 100; 85). The highest number of publications was produced in 2021 (100), 2018 (66) and 2019 (53). 14% (65) of the publications were conducted with the contribution of at least one international author.

There are also some projects carried out by the teaching staff and researchers involved in the study field (SAR, Annex 13.2). Research in the fields of Education and Pedagogy is carried out in close cooperation with several research fields, developing scientific and applied research. Overall, these research outputs are positive, highlighting the effort of the teaching staff and the RSU board to develop and improve the research and learning activities.

However, there are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant publications (SAR, Annexes 6.4 and 6.5) are not directly associated with the study programme (e.g., Medical Sciences, Epidemiology, Pharmacology). Furthermore, the strategy of the University should consider reinforcing the publications as original research in the most prestigious journals in the field of "Education and Pedagogy" related to this study programme.

2.4.5.

According to SAR (p. 128), the director of the study programme is responsible for ensuring the interconnection of the study courses and informing the lecturers regarding the learning outcomes of each course, as well as the necessary supplements. Since most of the courses are implemented by lecturers of the Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy, then the circulation of information is ensured at the level of department meetings, during observation of teaching, and in jointly implemented cooperation projects (presentations at conferences, cooperation in the development of students' Master's thesis projects, participation in annual Supervision Days events).

Moreover, the lecturers involved in the implementation of student placements meet regularly (once a month) to discuss different issues related to their teaching work. Working groups have been established in the Department, in which lecturers are grouped according to the courses to be implemented (e.g. Pedagogy Working Group). Such cooperation mechanisms ensure a rapid flow of information, the possibility to discuss issues in person and to make decisions based on listening to different points of view. Although these cooperation mechanisms are relevant and effective, it would be important to define a more detailed plan to coordinate all these pedagogical and scientific activities to improve the outcomes and the quality of this study programme.

As there are currently no students on the study programme, it is not possible to provide an accurate analysis of this criterion.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff members enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. The research outputs are overall positive, highlighting the effort of the teaching staff and the RSU board to develop and improve the research activities. Nevertheless, there are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant publications are not directly associated with the study programme.

Strengths:

- 1) The qualification of the teaching staff members, including both academic staff and teachers with experience in the field.
- 2) The teaching staff members present several years of practical experience in the field.
- 3) The professional experience of the teaching staff is very positive.
- 4) There are some positive research outputs.

Weaknesses:

- 1) There are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant publications are not directly associated with the study programme.
- 2) No foreign lecturers, even in a remote mode.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The qualification (education, experience in the field) of the teaching staff members and the research outputs enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the second cycle (professional master) study programme "Supervision" and the relevant study courses.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

SAR Annex 17.1 ("17.1_pielik_PMSP_Supervizija_atbilstiba_izglitibas_standartam_Mk305.pdf") and the corresponding Annex 19 ("19_pielik_Supervizija_studiju_programmas_plans.pdf") confirms that the second cycle (professional master) study programme complies with Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No. 305 "Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās augstākās izglītības standartu".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

SAR Annex 18.2 ("18.2_Anx_Prof_Standard_Mapping.pdf"), Annex 19 ("19_Anx_Supervision_plan.pdf") and Annex 20.1 ("20.1_Anx_Course_Descrip_Supervision.pdf") confirm that the study programme complies with the Supervisor professional standard, corresponding to the level 7 LQF (approved on June 12, 2019).

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The provided study course descriptions (SAR Annex 20.1 “20.1_piel_kursu_apraksti_Supervizija.pdf”) are prepared in Latvian. The study course descriptions mostly include all the requirements defined by the Law on Higher Education Institutions. However, some course descriptions are missing important details, such as the organization and tasks for independent student work, evaluation criteria for learning outcomes, and the total number of working hours, including time for exams and independent study. Section 2.2.1. of this report presents an analysis and a summary of these deficiencies relating to the study course descriptions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The provided Diploma sample (SAR Annex 24.1 “24.1_piel_Diploms_piel_paraugs.pdf”) mostly conforms to the procedure for issuing state-recognised higher education documents as outlined in Cabinet of Ministers’ Regulation No. 202 “Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus”. However, two discrepancies were identified. In section 4.3. “Programme details (e.g., modules or units studied) and the individual grades / marks / credits obtained” the total ECTS credits exceed the stated 120 by 9 ECTS. And section 2.1. “Name of qualification” does not indicate the qualification of Supervisor.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached resumes of staff and RSU confirmation letter 19.07.2024 Nr.3-DPAD-6/382/2024 (SAR Annex 24.4, “Certification Regarding the Knowledge of Latvian”) verifies that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet Regulation No. 157 (Adopted 8 March 2022) “Regulations

Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The attached sample form of a general study agreement (SAR Annex 24.6. “24.6_pielikums_Stud_liguma_paraugs.pdf”) includes all the requirements stipulated in Cabinet of Ministers’ Regulation No. 70 “Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The attached agreement with RISEBA University of Applied Sciences (SAR Annex 24.1 “24.1_piel_vienosanas_stud_turp.pdf”) confirms that RISEBA University of Applied Sciences agrees to provide the possibility to continue studies within the RISEBA professional Master’s study programme “Management Psychology and supervision”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

RSU 19.07.2024. confirmation letter No. 3-DPAD-6/383/2024 to foundation “Academic Information Centre” states, that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme fails to be accredited or the licence of the study programme is withdrawn due to the actions or inactions of the university and the student does not wish to continue their studies in another study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

SAR Annex 26 (“Pap26_piel_Supervizija_ANSE_standarts_LV_ENG”) confirms that the study programme fulfills most of the Association of National Organisations for Supervision (ANSE) requirements for supervisor education and even exceeds some of them. However, the admission requirements for the study programme specify a minimum of two years of relevant work experience, which contrasts with ANSE's stipulated minimum of four years of professional

experience. Nevertheless, according to SAR Annex 26, the study programme has been coordinated with the Latvian Association of Supervisors (LSA), and graduates may join LSA and obtain certification as supervisors.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study programme complies with most regulatory requirements. However, the noted discrepancies in the Diploma Supplement should be corrected to ensure full compliance. Furthermore, the identified discrepancies in the study course descriptions should be corrected to ensure full compliance. Specifically, descriptions should include the total working hours for each course and a breakdown of hours designated also for the exam and student independent work. Additionally, the organization and tasks for student independent work, as well as the evaluation criteria for learning outcomes, should be clearly defined.

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

The second cycle study programme "Supervision" (47142) aligns with the aims of the study field "Education and Pedagogy". The title, the goals of the study programme and the gained degree and professional qualification as a supervisor and its requirements are all interrelated. The learning outcomes reflect the interdisciplinarity of the study programme and the potential for its students to do research in interrelated disciplines and its graduates to work in many areas. However, no student admissions since 2022 and high drop-out rates create a lot of uncertainty about the potential number of students that could be admitted.

The place of implementation - Rīga Stradiņš University, located in Riga, is well-equipped with the facilities that support high-quality scientific research and the needs of the study programme. The study provision, including informational resources (library), material and technical support, and financial resources, fully meets the necessary conditions for programme implementation and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes.

Based on SAR, Annex 20.1 and experts' reflections from on-site visits, better balance should be found between the scientific and the professional part of the content of the study programme. The qualification of the teaching staff members and the research outputs enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the second cycle (professional master) study programme "Supervision" and the relevant study courses. However, based on the information of the SAR and Annex 06.4, there are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant publications are not directly associated with the study programme.

The second cycle study programme "Supervision" complies with most regulatory requirements. To ensure full compliance, the noted discrepancies in the Diploma Supplement and study course descriptions should be corrected.

According to the experts' opinion, there are no deficiencies identified that cannot be eliminated during the 2-year accreditation period. There are no obstacles to implementing the study programme in declared form as full-time studies in Latvian with a study duration of 2 years, which corresponds to the demands of a second-cycle programme.

Among the most important strengths the experts have identified the following aspects:

- 1) There is a demand for qualified specialists to provide psycho-emotional support, mitigate burnout

risks, and teach self-help and self-management techniques and approaches to teachers and other professionals in the business, governmental, and public sectors.

2) The qualification of the teaching staff members, including both academic staff and teachers with experience in the field.

3) The teaching staff members present several years of practical experience in the field.

4) The interdisciplinarity of the study programme and the potential for its students to do research in many disciplines and its graduates to work in many areas.

5) Four mandatory placements to gain plenty of professional experience already during the study process.

Based on the available information in SAR and from the site visit, there were identified weaknesses that have the most significant impact on the quality of the study programme:

1) There are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant publications are not directly associated with the study programme.

2) No foreign lecturers, even in a remote mode.

3) No students in the study programme.

4) Overwhelming presence of one professor's work for the required and recommended readings, also in the courses managed or led by the same professor.

5) The content of study courses has not been reviewed following the transition to the study field of "Education and Pedagogy".

6) The activities planned to attract students are very general and do not create confidence that a group of students will be admitted. It is important to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these activities as the study programme has had no students since 2022.

Evaluation of the study programme "Supervision"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Supervision"

Short-term recommendations

1) Until the study field is submitted for accreditation, review the Diploma sample and make sure that Diploma conforms to the procedure for issuing state-recognised higher education documents as outlined in Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No. 202. Specifically, review the total ECTS credits (section 4.3) and the professional status (section 5.2) to ensure they reflect accurate information.

2) Until the study field is submitted for accreditation, review the professional experience requirements for admission, particularly the exceptions made by the Latvian Association of Supervisors. Provide a rationale for deviations from these guidelines to maintain credibility and consistency.

3) Within the next academic year, diversify the required and recommended reading list in the course descriptions, including at least 20% of authors who are not in any capacity related with the study programme.

4) Within the next academic year add "Academic Integrity" as a topic in one of these study courses: "Research Methodology", "Research Data Analysis" or "Master Thesis".

5) Within the next calendar year, review the study course descriptions, paying particular attention to the sections outlining the organization and assignments for students' independent work and the evaluation criteria for learning outcomes, and ensure that these sections contain detailed descriptions and evaluation criteria. Additionally, supplement the study course descriptions with the total working hours applicable to each course, providing a clear breakdown of hours designated for the exam, student independent work, and lectures/seminars, to ensure compliance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and to improve student understanding of the expected workload for their independent study. Furthermore, it is recommended to include an indication within each study course description of its placement within the study programme (Part A, B, or C).

6) In the following 2 years conduct detailed SWOT analysis (ideally by external experts) to help better identify, if further attraction of the students should be attempted or the study programme should be considered for closing.

7) Within the next calendar year, assign a concrete number of hours to one credit point instead of leaving a range (25-30 hours).

Long-term recommendations

1) Incorporate more actively the teaching staff members of this study programme in scientific projects to overcome the differences in the research outputs among teaching staff members.

2) Review and revise the literature listed in course descriptions to ensure it includes the most recent and relevant publications.

3) Review the content of study courses following the transition to the study field of "Education and Pedagogy" and include in the description of the study courses related to internship practice-based cooperation in the form of consultations (supervisions) to bachelor's students as part of their placement.

4) Develop specific and targeted activities to attract students to the study programme, addressing the lack of admissions since 2022. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies to ensure continuous improvement.

5) Until the next accreditation process, attract at least 3 foreign lecturers from abroad (teaching remotely or in-person).

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

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

Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation	Comment
<p>R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:</p>	<p>Partially compliant</p>	<p>Following the recent merger of LASE into RSU LASE, the transition process has been accompanied by uncertainty and a lack of clarity regarding quality assurance processes among RSU LASE staff, which must be further addressed. Additionally, there is a need to enhance communication and establish effective bidirectional channels to mitigate these uncertainties and facilitate a seamless transition. At the moment, these elements can impact the continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study programmes at RSU LASE.</p>
<p>R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)</p>	<p>Partially compliant</p>	<p>Although there are some good projects and publications carried out by the teaching staff and researchers involved in the study field, including publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, the most relevant ones are not directly related to “Education and Pedagogy” and the study programmes, and there is a gap on the publications in the most significant and impactful journals in this study field. Moreover, there are some significant differences among academic staff members (including elected academic staff) in their output research publications and projects.</p>
<p>R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.</p>	<p>Partially compliant</p>	<p>Cooperation networks in Latvia are aimed at professional competence enhancement of the academic staff and improvement of study quality according to the specifics and aims regarding the study field and the relevant study programmes. Although the RSU International Department has developed an extensive network of European partner institutions and is actively using ERASMUS+ mobility grants, there is a lack of international cooperation networks developed in the relevant study field “Education and Pedagogy”. Also, there is an insufficient volume of incoming and outgoing mobility in the study field and its study programmes that would give additional benefits to ensure the quality of studies.</p>

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.		Partially compliant	Out of 47 recommendations 19 are considered as completed, 15 as partially completed and 11 as not completed. 1 recommendation has been impossible to evaluate due to no students in the study programme, 1 recommendation has been dismissed.

Assessment of the Requirements for the Relevant Study Programmes of the Study Field

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Sport and Education Specialist (41141)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good
2	Health, Physical Activity and Security (42141)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good
3	Supervision (47142)	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Average

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

None.