

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Latvian Academy of Culture agency "Latvian College of Culture at the Latvian Academy of Culture"

Study field: Information and Communication Sciences

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# **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 aim of the study field is well formulated and achievable. The study field and its only study programme correspond to the strategic development of the Latvian Academy of Culture agency "Latvian College of Culture at the Latvian Academy of Culture" (hereinafter – the College or LCC) and reflect the demands of socio-economic development of Latvia. The SWOT analysis is informative and actionable for decision-makers. The management structure fosters development, efficiency, and support during times of change. The assessment system and its stakeholders are well-versed in evaluating students and learning outcomes. The College recognizes the education and professional experience of students and has a procedure for acknowledging it. The admission policy, while suitable for the current applicant pool, may affect the future quality of studies. The College uses tools to detect and prevent plagiarism and educates stakeholders about academic integrity.

The College has an effective and transparent quality management system and policy that engages with relevant stakeholders to ensure and enhance the quality of the study field. Management of the study field collaborates with employers, students, and graduates to maintain the quality and implement necessary improvements and initiatives. A clear strategic communication plan is needed for the planned consolidation. Complaints and suggestions are preventively managed by the management and staff, which is possible due to the small-group dynamic and mutual trust. While allowing for short-term feedback, in the long run, it might compromise students' ability to complain about sensitive issues. The College collects and analyzes statistical data from its stakeholders, but since the number of stakeholders is rather small, more emphasis on a qualitative dimension of data gathering should be considered. Information important for students is publicly available and consistent on various platforms. The web page's visual design and user-friendliness could be improved.

The College has adequate resources for teaching and learning, but limited funds for new equipment, software, and maintenance. This is remedied by strong collaboration with employers, some resources are accessed through partner libraries, which exposes students to a diverse library environment. The study field also uses creative studios and technology from other study fields at the College. The College building is old and constraining. Moodle and distance learning tools are widely used in the study field, enabling successful hybrid learning. However, public informative resources in English are scarce, hindering international mobility and partnerships. The staff is well-trained and motivated despite low remuneration. There is no funding system for research or artistic work or for student aid.

The College's emphasis on applied research, artistic creativity and technology-enriched study processes contributes to preparing competitive specialists. Industry collaboration further enhances the study field's relevance, and international cooperation fosters global perspective and research. Funding challenges for research are being addressed, and the College's commitment to quality assurance and improvement ensures continuous development. The College's approach showcases a well-structured and comprehensive strategy for promoting scientific research, applied research, and artistic creation among students and faculty, contributing to the sustainable development of the study field and the cultural sector in Latvia.

The cooperation with industry in Latvia and abroad is commendable, promoting a comprehensive approach to enhancing the study field's relevance and quality. The selection of partners based on reputation and experience ensures students face real-world challenges and stay updated, effectively preparing for their careers. Locally, the College collaborates with academic institutions, industry associations, employers' organisations, libraries, NGOs, and ministries, aligning the study field with national standards. Participation in working groups enriches the learning experience. Internationally, the College engages with foreign HEIs, employers, NGOs, and institutes, benefiting students' skills

and global understanding. Outgoing mobility for teaching staff is supported by a full-time Erasmus coordinator. Addressing incoming mobility challenges is crucial, given the study programme's part-time format and pandemic impact. The commitment to teacher mobility emphasises its dedication to quality improvement. The strong cooperation with various institutions contributes significantly to strategic goals, preparing competitive specialists. Continuous efforts to address challenges and expand incoming mobility opportunities will enhance this further.

The teaching staff qualifications comply with the requirements and enable the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and courses. The staff consists of 10 members, including an Assistant Professor and 9 lecturers, all with relevant work experience and masters degrees. Additionally, 50% of staff hold masters degrees or professional education related to the library industry. The College takes measures to ensure cooperation and trust among the staff. The involvement of staff in industry study courses and emphasis on research enhance the experience for students. The College has also transitioned from guest lecturers to permanent staff, specified achievable study results and established mechanisms for co-creation and specialisation weeks, fostering interdisciplinarity. The student-to-lecturer ratio is reasonable, allowing effective management of studies and Qualification Papers. The College takes measures to ensure that changes in staff composition positively impact the study programme. The cooperation mechanisms facilitate the interconnection of study courses. Continuous monitoring and assessment are emphasised for sustained effectiveness.

The College has implemented most of the previous recommendations. It has enhanced its study environment, materials, data, projects, and programme content. It has also established an anonymous survey system, a Programme Council, and a student work repository. Some actions are partially implemented or need improvement, such as the English homepage, the repository content, the staff's English skills and research intensity, but the College shows a willingness to work on these issues. The experts praise the College for its response and encourage it to work on the areas that need more attention. The expected changes in the College's future may also affect or improve some of the development plans.

## **I - Assessment of the Study Field**

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#### **1.1 Management of the Study Field**

##### **Analysis**

1.1.1. The aim of the study field – to prepare competent specialists with knowledge and skills corresponding to the specifics of the library and information study field – is clearly defined and attainable. It also corresponds to the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021-2027, with special attention being paid to the national cultural policy priorities "Cultural State", which is the professional development of cultural workers, preservation and creative use of cultural heritage [Self-assessment report – SAR, p. 13]. Overall, the management of the study field follows the trends of the development of the institution as well as meets the development trends of the society and national economy.

As evident from SAR and confirmed during the expert visit, the study field's strategic goal embodies essential characteristics of the education system in Latvia such as an individualised learning approach; balanced and future-oriented skills acquisition; functional transformation of educational institution; and improved education management system [SAR, p. 14].

The interconnection between the study field and the study programme is clear and logical, as evident in the definitions of the priorities of the development of the study field and programme. The implementation of courses corresponds not only to the needs of libraries and their work specifics but also to the border necessities of the cultural field and technology-related services [SAR, p. 14-15].

In conclusion, the aim of the study field is well formulated and achievable. The study field and its study program correspond to the strategic development of the College and reflect the contemporary demands of social and economic development of the Latvian State.

1.1.2. The College's SAR document demonstrates a clear and realistic take on SWOT, its evaluated elements are echoed consistently across different members of academic and administrative staff thus demonstrating a coherent understanding [SAR, p. 16-17, on-site visit]. The weaknesses associated with the limited resources are addressed by developing close relationships with relevant industry institutions. The Development Plan of the Study Direction [Annex 4] addresses issues identified in the SWOT analysis and provides the implementation plan for necessary measures as well as performance indicators.

In conclusion, the SWOT analysis is carried out in a form that provides clear guidance for decision-makers to integrate it into their planning documents and acting plans.

The experts would like to further analyse the major potential strength and development opportunity which is the planned merger with the Latvian Academy of Culture [hereinafter - LAC]. It will promote synergies and the sharing of resources. By merging, the budgets of the two educational institutions can be combined, creating greater financial stability. The two institutions could merge their study programmes and courses, allowing students to choose from a wider range of study options. This would stimulate student interest and attract more potential students. By coming together, teachers and researchers at the institutions could develop new collaborations and joint research projects that would foster scientific growth and innovative solutions. The newly merged institution could have a greater impact and prestige both locally and internationally. This would enhance its reputation and make it an attractive choice for both students and potential funders.

However, it should be remembered that merging institutions is a complex process and requires careful planning, consultation with stakeholders and possibly adaptation of legislation and regulations. A detailed analysis of the potential merger, taking into account both the financial advantages and the potential challenges, should be carried out to ensure a successful merger and sustainable development.

1.1.3. The study field's and programme's management structure corresponds to the development of the study field [Annex 5] and the new management demonstrates an in-depth understanding and pragmatic approach to problem-solving [on-site visit].

Considering the relatively small size of the College and the study field in terms of numbers of students and personnel, the formally established management structure is not the only one ensuring the development of the study field. Experts positively recognize the close-knit community of academic and administrative staff members as well as students that are created in the study field and also use informal networks to make the decision-making process effective [on-site visit].

In conclusion, the study field's management structure provides a good basis for development, efficient decision-making, and a supportive atmosphere for the institution during times of change.

1.1.4. Considering the specifics of the study programme of the study field-it is developed with working students in mind, everyone who applies is accepted for the study programme as well and there are no state-financed study places so every student pays for his/her studies-the simple existence of a document about previously acquired secondary education determines whether a potential student can be admitted to study [Admission Requirements 2023/2024, on-site visit]. While this logic is reasonable considering the experience from the field that most applicants have, in the long run, it might compromise the quality of the studies, especially in the case where applicants' work experience in the field is minimal or nonexistent. Therefore, experts suggest developing a more systematic admissions procedure that would include the results of previously gained education, professional experience, and motivation to be part of the evaluation of candidates.

Regarding the student's achievements and learning outcomes, there are several procedures in place. Among the main activities in ensuring the internal quality of the studies there is analysis of students' achieved results taking place that controls students' success in general and in individual study courses, submission of coursework to the committee, representation and analysis of Qualification Papers with industry experts of the Qualification Examination committee, use of the unified anti-plagiarism control system [SAR, p. 26] Table 12 Quantitative criteria of the study program "Library Science and Information" [SAR, p. 85–86] explains assessment and its forms in detail. The study results to be achieved are determined in the study course descriptions updated in 2022, the content of the Qualification Paper corresponds to the study results to be achieved [SAR, p. 12] "Examination Regulations" of the Latvian College of Culture at LAC is publicly available in the College webpage [<https://kulturaskoledza.lv/en/about-college/documents/>]. Also, regulations regarding the recognition of competencies acquired in professional experience outside formal education are developed and publicly available [<https://kulturaskoledza.lv/en/about-college/documents/>].

The evaluation of the study results achieved by the students takes place in accordance with the Law on Professional Education, the instructions of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the College Regulations, as well as the Study Regulations and Examination Regulations, and the Practice Regulations. Students are informed about the achievable study results and their evaluation system at the beginning of the study course, by getting acquainted with the description of the study course [SER, p. 86, on-site visit]

In conclusion, the system for assessment of students and learning outcomes is well developed and its involved stakeholders demonstrate a strong understanding of it. The College recognizes the education and professional experience of its students and there is a procedure in place for formalising it. The current approach to the admission of the students, while corresponding to the current situation of applicants, might compromise the long-term quality of studies.

1.1.5. The student-centred approach to education is at the heart of the methods, principles, and procedures developed for assessing student achievements. Documents such as course descriptions, Examination Regulations, and Regulations for Qualification Examinations as well as departmental meetings and the meetings of the Council of Study Programs are in place—developed, regularly updated, accessible and/or used to identify the situation regarding students' performance and their needs [SAR, p. 22–24]. This, coupled with the close relationships among management, teaching staff, and students in the context of the small-group environment, ensures that the needs of students are known and taken into consideration [on-site visit]. Moreover, in study course evaluation surveys, students provide feedback to lecturers about the learning process in the specific study course, thus lecturers have the opportunity to respond to the needs of students, changing and improving teaching activities and methods for achieving study results [SAR, p. 22–24].

Evaluation criteria of study results are also clearly outlined for each study course in their course descriptions [Annex 25]. The course descriptions are freely available to students on the respective course Moodle pages, as well as introduced during the first lecture of the courses [on-site visit].

In conclusion, methods, principles, and procedures for assessing the achievements of students are in place, relevant, well-developed and defined. Students' needs are regularly analysed and taken into consideration when improving the study process.

1.1.6. For its academic integrity, the College relies on its Code of Ethics and the Ethics Commission as well as joint anti-plagiarism tools [<https://kulturaskoledza.lv/en/about-college/documents/>], the information on this is publicly available at the College's webpage.

Students are introduced to and regularly reminded of the academic integrity principles before and during their work, starting with introductory information during the study course "Methodology of Research" [SAR, p. 25, on-site visit], however, this is not directly outlined in the relevant course

description (or any other course description).

In a time where artificial intelligence poses threats but also provides opportunities for different spheres of academic work, the College changed regulations to define AI as prohibited from being used in students' work while recognizing that this issue might be minor since students' work is mostly practical in nature. Also, small groups allow recognition of students' styles, which, together with the necessity to defend final work in front of the experts from the field, serves as a guarantee that problematic students' work can be identified [on-site visit].

In conclusion, the College has tools at its disposal to check plagiarism and mechanisms for dealing with identified cases. Stakeholders are informed about it and take an active stance to prohibit unethical activities. Reference to the principles of academic ethics is missing from the course descriptions.

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

The aim of the study field is well formulated and achievable. The study field and its study programme correspond to the strategic development of the College and reflect the contemporary demands of social and economic development of the Latvian State. The SWOT analysis is carried out in a form that provides clear guidance for decision-makers to integrate it into their planning documents and acting plans. The study field's management structure provides a good basis for development, efficient decision-making, and a supportive atmosphere for the institution during times of change. The system for assessment of students and learning outcomes is well developed and its involved stakeholders demonstrate a strong understanding of it. The College recognizes the education and professional experience of its students and there is a procedure in place for formalising it. The current approach to the admission of the students, while corresponding to the current situation of applicants, might compromise the long-term quality of studies. The College has tools at its disposal to check plagiarism and mechanisms for dealing with identified cases. Stakeholders are informed about it and take an active stance to prohibit unethical activities.

Strengths:

1. Academic integrity, collaboration between members of academic staff, strong feeling of professionalism and commitment.
2. Well-prepared and analytical SWOT analysis.
3. Students' assessment and needs analysis.
4. Management, even though they serve a short time in post, demonstrate impetus for development and appear to act on an open door policy/involvement of academic staff/stakeholders.

Weaknesses:

1. Reference to the principles of academic ethics and integrity is missing from the relevant course descriptions.
2. A systematic admissions procedure that would include evaluation of the results of previously gained education, professional experience, and motivation is missing.

## **1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System**

### **Analysis**

1.2.1. The College's quality management system policy was approved in May 2023. The policy states that the College's quality management system provides internal and external quality assessment procedures, where internal assessment is dominated by monitoring approaches, while external assessments are carried out as periodic assessments in specific operational directions or priorities. It also emphasises the importance of the systemic approach – a clear sequence of processes and their

interaction, division of responsibilities, criteria and methods for effective process operation and management [<https://kulturaskoledza.lv/en/about-college/documents/>].

The internal quality assurance system of the College corresponds to the College's "Manual of Quality Management System", which is publicly available on the College webpage. The manual visually illustrates the quality management system's processes as well as enumerates documents associated with the reglamentation of a particular process and indicators used for measuring the effectiveness of a particular process [<https://kulturaskoledza.lv/en/about-college/documents/>]. The manual is user-friendly and comprehensible for various audiences of the college. It also illustrates the regularity of implementation of particular steps of the processes.

The aforementioned documents demonstrate that the College deeply cares about continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and its programme. During the last four years around 70% of the quality management activities had been actualized and the staff members involved in quality management recognized the improvement since the manual was approved in 2019. Also, experts recognize the importance of outsourced training for quality assurance system development whereby process holders were defined along with their responsibilities of the assessment [on-site visit].

In conclusion, the College has a well-developed and informatively accessible quality management system and policy that demonstrates deep involvement in establishing effective, comprehensible, and up-to-date procedures for the quality management of the study field.

1.2.2. The management of the study field involves employers in the assessment and development of the study field and its programme and takes into consideration their suggestions and contributions regarding the quality of the studies at the College [SAR, p. 27–28]. During the expert visit, both the management of the study programme and representatives of employers demonstrated a coherent understanding of the development of the study programme and necessary changes already implemented in the content of the study programme. Experts recognize the strong commitment of stakeholders to maintain and develop educational activities at the workplace, thus ensuring the contribution of up-to-date practical knowledge and skills development of students.

The feedback system for students is in place and uses formal and informal ways of gaining an in-depth understanding of their learning experiences. Experts recognize a strong commitment to individual approach to each student expressed by academic personnel as well as management of the study field and programme.

Considering the specifics of the students and graduates—adults who already have experience in the field, as well as small group dynamics, the identification of aspects for improvement regarding the content of studies relies on immediate, personal, and informal feedback. The staff knows about the situation of students, employers, and graduates via informal channels of communication and professional networks where students, graduates, and employers mingle in close proximity [the expert visit]. While the above-mentioned is considered to be an incentive, some risks are involved in relation to the group-think phenomenon and considering the near consolidation process whereby more formal communication will become necessary as joint institutions will most likely develop a more elaborate network of stakeholders. Experts note that the College and the study field are now in a good position to strategically plan and potentially establish, for instance, the alumni organisation and effective albeit formal long-term communication channels thus ensuring the sustainability of established networks.

In conclusion, the management of the study field and programme works closely with employers, students, and graduates in order to maintain the quality of the study programme and implement necessary improvements and initiatives. A strategic approach to creating more formal albeit effective and sustainable communication networks should be taken in the light of planned consolidation.

1.2.3. The mechanism for submitting student complaints does exist and is explained on the College's webpage. While during the last period, such complaints had not been received, the previous experience described in the SAR indicates that the study field's management is eager to listen to the students and take their suggestions seriously - a majority of activities are directed at the prevention of conflict situations with the means of communication, consultation, special meetings, and explanatory work [SAR, p. 30, on-site visit]. The possibility to remain anonymous while submitting the complaint is compromised due to the fact that the procedure requires to indicate name and preferred form of communication. Experts encourage the study field to consider this and develop alternative, anonymous forms of complaint submission to ensure a safe environment for revealing sensitive issues.

In conclusion, complaints and suggestions are preventively managed due to personal connections, small-group dynamics and mutual trust between management, academic staff, and students, which, while effectively allowing for immediate feedback, might compromise the ability to complain about sensitive issues.

1.2.4. The statistical data collection mechanism is established and measures the relevant aspects of the study quality and overall aspects of the study experience as well as the perspective of graduates and employers. Overall the data demonstrates general satisfaction and allows for gathering information necessary for potential improvement [SAR, Annex 9]. Also, from the expert visit it is clear that the existing mechanism when combined with an informal conversation with students, graduates, and employers, provides a realistic picture of emerging issues that are addressed immediately.

During the experts' visit, it was mentioned that information about the quality of particular courses is obtained rather effectively, however, from the Analysis of student, graduate, and employer surveys, the total number of the student respondents participating in the survey at the end of the courses is not clear. The same issue-lack of mentioning the number of total respondents, is identified in the description of the results of the employer survey. Additionally, the annual student satisfaction survey is able to gather information from slightly more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the students. [SAR, Annex 9].

Considering the size of student groups (small) in general, statistical data might not be a precise way of measuring since there are simply too small numbers of respondents to gather statistically significant data. Experts recognize the effectiveness of employer interviews [SAR, Annex 9] and graduate phone surveys [SAR, p. 79] that were carried out previously and generally encourage adding qualitative methods to the data collection mechanism that are able to provide a more in-depth picture of the situation of students.

In conclusion, the College puts a lot of effort into ensuring necessary statistical data about its students, graduates, and employers and mostly is successful in reaching the maximum number of respondents. Since the number of involved stakeholders is rather small, more emphasis on adding a qualitative dimension to the data gathering should be considered.

1.2.5. Information about the study field and the programme implemented within it is published on the College website and can be obtained from <https://kulturaskoledza.lv/> and <https://kulturaskoledza.lv/en/study-programmes/library-information-specialist/> as well as is consistent across official registers. Applicants and students are provided with necessary information in both Latvian and English languages.

While the webpage information is generally sufficient with minor differences when it comes to Latvian and English versions, the design could be more aesthetically developed, especially considering the creative emphasis of the College study programmes to serve the distinctive image of the institution. Experts recognize the financial struggle and suggest prioritising the development of a modern presence in the digital environment as the first possibility.

In conclusion, the information important for students is available and consistent while its' visual

design and user-friendliness a matter for development.

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

The College has a well-developed and informatively accessible quality management system and policy that demonstrates deep involvement in establishing effective, comprehensible, and up-to-date procedures for the quality management of the study field. The management of the study field and programme works closely with employers, students, and graduates in order to maintain the quality of the study programme and implement necessary improvements and initiatives. A strategic approach to creating more formal albeit effective and sustainable communication networks should be taken in the light of planned consolidation. Complaints and suggestions are preventively managed by the management of the study programme and relevant staff members due to the small-group dynamics and mutual trust between management, academic staff, and students. While effectively allowing for short-term immediate feedback, in the long run, it might compromise students' ability to complain about sensitive issues. College puts a lot of effort into ensuring necessary statistical data about its students, graduates, and employers and mostly is successful in reaching the maximum number of respondents. Since the number of involved stakeholders is rather small, more emphasis on adding a qualitative dimension to the data gathering should be considered. The information important for students is publicly available and consistent along various platforms. The web page's visual design and user-friendliness could be improved.

#### **Strengths:**

1. Systematic approach to the development, description, and implementation of quality management system and policy.
2. Close relationships with students, graduates, and employers that allow listening to the suggestions regarding improvement of the study programme and study experience in general as well as implementing improvements immediately.
3. Persistent work towards gathering statistical data about students, graduates, and employers' perspectives.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. Maintaining anonymity while complaining is impossible for students.
2. Small groups of respondents cannot provide valuable data with statistical significance.
3. The design and user experience of the College webpage is rather poor.

### **Assessment of the requirement [1]**

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

#### **Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

SAR, p. 25-32 along with its Annex 3 and Quality Management Policy and Quality Management System Manual [<https://kulturaskoledza.lv/en/about-college/documents/>] describes the internal quality assurance system in detail.

The Experts group notes that, in assessing a requirement, the experts take into account the fact that one of the sub-requirements is partially compliant, but the experts do not consider that this affects the assessment of the requirement as a whole. The College has demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement and development, it is simply that within the limitations of their financial situation so far, it has been challenging to implement specific tools that tools that can be seen in other institutions (like various financial motivations and aids) .The

group of experts acknowledged that the financial situation is a major challenge for the college, affecting all its activities.

- 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

SAR, p. 25–32 along with its Annex 4 and 24 as well as regulatory documents for Studies, Examinations, Practice, and Ethics [<https://kulturaskoledza.lv/en/about-college/documents/>].

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The mechanism is described by Procedure for the Development Approval and Update of Study Programs [<https://kulturaskoledza.lv/en/about-college/documents/>] in accordance with the strategic goals expressed in Annex 4, supervision and inspection maintained via SAR and its internal approval.

- 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

Regulatory documents for Studies, Examinations, Practice, and Qualification Examinations are developed and publicly available at [<https://kulturaskoledza.lv/en/about-college/documents/>].

- 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:** Partially compliant

Operational and development strategy 2021–2027 actualizes the academic staff's motivational, training and digital competency needs [<https://kulturaskoledza.lv/en/about-college/documents/>] individual support for further education, method learning, project participation described in SAR, p. 25–32. The aforementioned documents mention ensuring the academic staff development very briefly and put all emphasis on the quality of studies and study experience. Academic staff members have a chance to develop albeit mostly at the partner institutions or institutions of their primary employment.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

SAR, p. 31–32 describes the modes of collecting information and Annex 9 provides analysis of the statistical data collected.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

SAR, p.26 lists 9 activities to ensure the internal quality of the studies. SAR, p.26–27 enumerates

the most important activities when implementing quality improvement measures within the internal quality assurance system.

### **1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field**

#### **Analysis**

1.3.1. The current system for determining and redistributing financial support required for the implementation of the study field is annual planning of the institutional budget by the College director and accounting specialists in cooperation with other structural units. The planning and execution are supervised by the rector and finance director of the Latvian Academy of Culture (hereinafter – LAC) [SAR, p. 33].

The College is a state-funded higher education institution that operates under the supervision of LAC. The College receives its income from various sources, such as tuition fees, state grants, commercial courses and seminars, rental revenue, international and local projects, etc. The main source of financial support for the study field "Information and Communication Sciences", however, is student self-financing. The calculation of the necessary financial security for the implementation of the study programme has been carried out, in which the costs are classified as follows:

1. Remuneration of academic and administrative staff;
2. Costs of services (costs of communication services, information systems, etc.);
3. Costs of materials, energy resources and inventory (costs of building maintenance, costs of purchasing teaching aids and materials, costs of purchasing books and magazines, costs of equipment and inventory) [SAR, p. 33].

The College has improved its financial situation in this period, settling its significant debt and stabilising expenses. However, this has meant a prolonged period of stagnation in several fields, such as having limited financial resources for updating and purchasing equipment, information resources, software, and licences that are necessary for the modernization and digitalization of the study process. The College relies on external cooperation and support from other institutions, such as the National Library of Latvia, to provide access to additional resources [SAR, p. 16–17]. This cooperation is strong as the library field is close-knit and in need of the specialists the College provides, however, this may not be sufficient or sustainable in the long term.

Financial struggles also mean that the College has a low level of remuneration for academic and administrative staff, which affects their motivation, performance, and turnover, despite it making up 77.7% of all study programme expenditure [SAR, p. 17, 48].

A system for funding scientific or applied research and artistic creation is not clearly defined as the College does not have regular base funding for research – it mainly depends on partners and projects, e.g. recent cooperation with the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Erasmus+ Education, Training Youth and Sports programme, et al. [noted during the on-site visit]. Additionally, the College is not registered as a scientific institution, which means that it is not possible to apply for separate project activities and funding for scientific activities [SAR, p. 16, 51], however, it does foresee close future cooperation with LAC. For now, the situation notably affects the research potential and output of the teaching staff, as well as their recognition and reputation in the academic community.

The consolidation of the College with LAC could bring several advantages and improve the financial situation of both institutions. By merging, the budgets of the two educational institutions can be combined, creating greater financial stability. This would allow resources to be managed more efficiently and avoid duplication. The overall size and impact of the institutions could increase the amount of funding available. This would allow both institutions to apply for more funding for project activities and scientific activities. The merger could also reduce administrative costs as many functions and services could be centralised and managed more efficiently.

1.3.2. The College has identified the infrastructure resources and material and technical support necessary for the implementation of the study field. It has reasonably equipped infrastructure and material resources for the implementation of the study field “Information and Communication Sciences”. However, the College admits, that it has limited financial resources to purchase new equipment, information resources, software and licenses that are necessary for the modernization and digitalization of the study process, as well as for maintaining and repairing its equipment and software [SAR, p. 17], which can hinder the quality and efficiency of the study process. The College has mapped the basic procedures of all sorts of provision improvement and acquisition in its Quality Management System Manual (QMSM), however, it does not include clear information on who is in charge of implementing these procedures. A good example of their provisions procedures is the Library Collection Policy that introduces a Library Collection Commission as its main implementer [SAR, p. 39], and as the library plays a major role in this study field, its continuous improvement is a major advantage to this study field’s implementation.

Despite the College having limited financial resources, they look for solutions in cooperation with other institutions that provide additional infrastructural resources and material support for the study field. For example, the National Library of Latvia (NLL) offers access to its collections and services to the College’s students and teaching staff. The NLL also hosts some of the College’s events and practices on its premises [SAR, p. 96]. The College makes good use of its own space and facilities for organizing various events, such as seminars, workshops, exhibitions, etc. to the best of its ability. Unfortunately, the College operates in a building that was not originally built for the needs of an educational institution and has limited possibilities for expansion or renovation [SAR, p. 4].

The study field greatly benefits from the availability of resources that are established for other study fields and programmes, such as a fully functional photo studio, video editing room, sound recording studio, etc [SAR, p. 32–34]. These resources provide additional opportunities for students to develop creative projects and theses that demonstrate their competencies and skills.

1.3.3. Possibly the most significant resource for this study field is the College library with over 7500 books, periodicals, audiovisual materials, and electronic resources related to culture, art, communication, and information. The library also provides access to various databases, such as EBSCO, ScienceDirect, Cambridge Journals, JSTOR/ArtStor, and others [SAR, p. 38]. The library is open to students and teaching staff from Monday to Thursday from 8:30 to 17:00, on Fridays from 8:30–16:00, as well as on Saturdays from 8:30 to 13:00, when students of the “Information and Communication Sciences” are on site. The library also organizes various events, such as book presentations, exhibitions, seminars, etc [College website].

The College Library Collection Commission is responsible for developing and implementing the library’s collection policy and evaluating the quality and relevance of the library’s resources [SAR, p. 39]. The College also involves students and teaching staff in the evaluation and improvement of the material and technical provision through surveys, feedback, and suggestions. The library’s resources are regularly updated and supplemented according to the curriculum and user requests.

The College has good cooperation with the National Library of Latvia, where all the necessary resources are available. The possibility to use all digital resources, available professional literature, databases, ebooks, etc. is highly appreciated. Cooperation with other libraries is also at a high level, so the amount of resources available can be considered sufficient. The cooperation providing extra resources and making students engage with these partner libraries is an additional bonus due to the only study programme in the study field being in library science – the exposure to various systems and collections brings additional value and variety to the students' study process and results. However, if the study field were to expand in the future, e.g. after consolidation, with study programmes in other scientific fields, the study programmes may suffer from the fragmentation of information resources.

1.3.4. The College uses various information and communication technology solutions to ensure the study process, especially in the case of distance learning. Regular improvements are made to material and technical support of the study process – development of the e-learning environment, improvements to digital tools, and monitoring of the creative and motivating environment. The following solutions are used regularly:

- Use of Microsoft Teams and Zoom platforms for remote lectures;
- Use of the unified computer-based plagiarism control system of Latvian universities to check compliance with the principles of academic integrity;
- Use of the Latvian University Information System (LUIS) for management of student data and study processes;
- Use of the e-learning environment Moodle for access to study materials, independent work, quizzes, tests and assessments, and communication with students.

The Moodle platform serves as the main online learning environment for the study programme “Library Science and Information”. The Moodle platform allows students and teaching staff to access course materials, assignments, quizzes, forums, chats, etc. The Moodle platform also supports various multimedia formats, such as videos, e-books, etc. The Moodle platform is accessible to students and teaching staff from any device with an internet connection [SAR, p. 39-40].

For daily communication with students, WhatsApp groups, e-mails, Moodle e-learning environment and meetings with students via Microsoft Teams or Zoom platform are used. Students note that these ways of communication are easy to use and have improved their communication with academic as well as administrative staff.

The College also uses other online tools and platforms to enhance the study process, such as Jamboard, Mentimeter, Padlet, Miro, Kahoot and others, as well as MS Project, ABBYY FineReader, Adobe InDesign, WordPress, Google Drive, etc [SAR, p. 35, 39-40]. Online solutions such as Google Shared Documents, surveys questionnaires and tests integrated into the e-learning environment are used to enhance student engagement in lectures, assess competencies and obtain feedback. In addition, lecturers are encouraged to use other digital tools as appropriate. Such tools and platforms enable students and teaching staff to communicate, collaborate, share, and present their work in real-time or asynchronously, as well as offer various features, such as video conferencing, cloud storage, interactivity and gamification opportunities [SAR, p. 39].

As the usage of the Moodle platform is a relatively new introduction for the College, there is still room to grow and learn about the various built-in tools and ways for students and staff to interact on the platform. To make Moodle's current content more user-friendly, the College could maximise the platform's available features. Moodle is a powerful learning management system that offers a range of tools and settings to enhance the user experience for both academic staff and students. By maximising options and features, a more user-friendly and engaging learning experience for Moodle users can be created. It is important to remember that the specific needs and preferences of students may vary, so regularly gathering feedback and making improvements accordingly will further enhance the overall user experience.

1.3.5. These procedures are based on The College's Staff Policy, which was approved in 2020 and aims to promote the motivation, professional development and performance of the academic and administrative staff [SAR, p. 11-12, Staff Policy], describing the various objectives of further procedures regarding staff. However, it only mentions the need to attract new and knowledgeable employees via successful staff planning, competitive remuneration and creation of a positive and productive work environment, which are rather broad tasks with no clear actionable direction, so they can not be fully considered as implemented procedures for attracting teaching staff [Staff Policy]. The College has a unique educational profile that attracts teaching staff who are interested in the field of culture and information, as well as in the integration of theory and practice in the study process, however, just as marketing for students has been on a comparative hold in the

reporting period, so has work on attraction of teaching staff.

The personnel policy outlines the principles, criteria and procedures for the recruitment, selection, evaluation and remuneration of the teaching staff. The personnel policy also defines the rights and obligations of the teaching staff, as well as the opportunities and requirements for their professional development and career advancement [Staff Policy]. Another regulatory document in place is the College Regulations for Academic and Administrative Positions, which clearly describes the requirements and procedures for election to academic and administrative positions [Regulations].

The College's current teaching staff is made up of academically trained professionals in their field, who regularly advance their qualifications at various conferences, seminars, and professional development courses and who participate as guest speakers and experts at events organized by other institutions. The College's academic evaluation of the qualifications and quality of work of the teaching staff is based on the following indicators - study work and scientific research activity. Evaluation is carried out 1) cyclically before election to an academic post and at the end of the election period; 2) annually.

The quality of academic staff work is evaluated on the basis of the results achieved by students in the teaching process, information provided by student surveys and active participation of the College management in various activities organised by lecturers - exhibitions, creative events, presentations of final examinations, defence of course and qualification papers.

1.3.6. One of the tasks of the College's strategy action plan for 2023–2027 envisages promoting the professional growth of academic and administrative staff and regular improvement of staff competencies, with academic and administrative staff participating in professional development courses and programmes. The control of its execution is entrusted to the Personnel Department of the College, in cooperation with heads of departments and directors of study programmes [SAR, p. 44].

Professional development events are organised both based on the need to learn innovations (for example, the integration of an e-study environment in the study process) and by analysing the professional development needs of lecturers, the proposals of the study programme director and lecturers. For example, the survey of lecturers conducted at the end of the study year 2021/2022 highlighted the need for learning digital tools for lectures, which was taken into account when offering the seminar [SAR, p. 44].

The professional development of the academic staff of the College is implemented in several directions: improvement of professional qualifications, pedagogical, scientific research and digital competencies and development of foreign language (English) skills. Improvement of professional qualifications has been carried out in an integrated manner as part of the lecturers' professional activity - lecturers have attended industry conferences, and seminars, and participated in projects and 45 industry development working groups. The acquired professional knowledge is integrated into the content of study courses, Term and Qualification Paper management [SAR, p. 44-45].

The lecturers have implemented the improvement of pedagogical, scientific research and digital competencies of the academic staff both by participating in training and seminars organised by the College and by attending courses and professional development programmes offered by other organisations. Examples of the participation of study area lecturers in professional development events 2020-2023. Year [SAR, p. 45].

The College aims to always support the involvement of its teaching staff in scientific and artistic projects, publications, conferences, exhibitions, mobility programs and other forms of lifelong learning, however, the College is limited financially in what support and motivation they can provide. The quality of the academic staff's work is evaluated based on the student results achieved in the learning process, the information provided by student surveys, and the College's management actively participating in various activities organised by the lecturers - exhibitions, creative events, presentations of final examinations of the study course, defending Course and Qualification Papers.

Discussions are held with the new lecturers to ensure support in creating the content of study courses and choosing teaching methods. Lecturers are provided with feedback on students' assessment of the study process and support in learning new methods [SAR, p. 46].

1.3.7. The College has a part-time workload for most of its teaching staff, which is determined by a wide range of competencies required for various qualifications [SAR, p. 16, 47]. This may limit the availability, long-term commitment and involvement of the teaching staff in the study process, as well as their sense of belonging and identity with the College.

The academic staff payment system and low salary do not stimulate scientific research activities of teaching staff and affect the turnover of academic staff [SAR, p. 16].

The importance of internships is emphasised at the College and is highly valued by both students and lecturers. In our conversations, we found that teachers use innovative methods in both individual and group work. Scientific research is scarce.

Long-term commitment and involvement in the implementation of study programmes is essential to ensure that the content and teaching methods of study courses are well-structured and kept up to date. Academic staff can keep abreast of the latest developments and innovations in their field, which in turn responds to the needs of students and industry, and can be easily integrated into the study courses that have been developed by them.

1.3.8. Since the study field only features a study programme that operates part-time, most of its resources have been adapted for part-time and distance learning student comfort. The study programme director and head of the Study department are in frequent contact with students to provide support and help with organisational matters. Due to the small number of students, a very individualised approach can be taken. Training is provided for students using Moodle, LUIS, Teams and Zoom platforms that are most commonly used in the study process [SAR, p. 49]. The library also actively offers support as the main structure for the study programme "Library Information Specialist". Regular meetings are organised for the students to be fully informed on the process of Term and Qualification Paper creation and defence [SAR, p. 27].

The College notes that there is a lack of state and local support for the students regarding financing [SAR, p. 17], considering that as the study programme is part-time, there is no opportunity for students to compete for state-financed study placement. Their only potential support in this regard is the governmental loan system. Experts encourage the College to seek other opportunities to raise funds for establishing scholarships for the best students or students in difficult life situations. Perhaps this could be further explored via the collaborations that are already in place with the National Library of Latvia or other libraries that may be future employers of the graduates. Existing publishing houses that are paid for licensing agreements could provide for one or more yearly scholarships or one-time scholarships for conferences, and travel expenses (e.g. for family expenses during traineeships, etc.).

The College should collect and disseminate information that can be helpful for their students regarding state or municipal support. Although no incoming or outgoing mobility involving students has happened during the reporting period [Annex 17], the College should consider it a possibility and prepare accordingly to have resources available for incoming students. It is commendable that there is now an Erasmus coordinator since 2022 [SAR, p. 66]. It should also be taken into consideration that the last reporting period has been difficult for all HEIs in connection to the epidemiological restrictions and the following more cautious travelling mindset for education.

There have been several recommendations regarding improvement of the College's homepage in English during previous quality assessments, and some improvements have been made, however, it still lacks vital information for the encouragement of Erasmus+ and full-time foreign student involvement. This is an issue that impacts the work of the entire College. It can be readily assumed that the English version of the homepage would primarily be visited by three groups – 1) students

looking for Erasmus+ opportunities 2) students looking for full-time study opportunities and 3) potential international cooperation partners. Keeping this in mind, experts would like to emphasize the need to create this space as user-friendly and informative as possible in order to encourage international development and attract new talent. Considering that, following the Covid-19 pandemic, talks have resumed with the National College of Šiauliai as the nearest higher education institution implementing a vocational higher education programme "Information Services" in full-time and part-time form, it would be vital to provide information in English to enable such cooperation.

To provide some feedback and ideas for improvement, some weaknesses on the homepage will be further outlined, which could be developed. The section of Erasmus+ information doesn't feature information on how to contact the Erasmus+ coordinator other than by mail (not e-mail), despite often mentioning that the reader should contact them (similar call to contact regards Study department, which has no contact info attached). The Contacts page includes only the contact information of the College director. It is doubtful and would be bad practice that all international inquiries should be addressed directly to the director. The only directly referenced contact points are studinfo@lkk.gov.lv, linked under Admission documents as the one to send documents to, and the study programme directors, linked under specific study programmes.

There is also no page providing information on courses that a foreign student would be able to take without explicit Latvian language skills (even if none, it should be noted that Latvian language skills are strictly required to take any/all courses) and no further information on the content of courses included in the study programme "Library information specialist". Experts suggest that a general course catalogue should be offered to familiarise potential students with the expected study content. The FAQ page is empty, although a lot of information could be useful for foreign students either considering or arriving at the College, e.g. services available at the College (library, workspaces etc.), extracurricular activities (student council, theatre group, regular cultural events or campaigns etc.), relevant transportation options, as well as information about accessibility for people with physical disabilities, and if and what support can be offered for people with other needs – learning disabilities, mental health conditions and otherwise.

It is commendable that the Latvian version includes a clear and straightforward description of the physical accessibility of the College, including photos – this should be made available for the English version, too. However, information regarding the available support for people with other needs is also lacking here. The SAR mentions that individual discussion and adaptation of coursework, scheduling and extra study method opportunities are available if the students' physical or psychological condition demands it (p. 50), and experts believe it should also be highlighted on the site to show the College's awareness, respect and forthcoming for such situations.

Despite an established student council in charge of protecting and promoting the rights and interests of the students in academic, social, cultural and financial matters, it is evident from conversations during the visit that the student council has not been actively involved in the development of this study field. In 2021, a suggestion regarding the change in providing second foreign languages was implemented (moving away from Russian language and offering French or Spanish) [SAR, p. 30], however, the staff revealed during the on-site visit that this may not be a long-term change and that they consider Russian language skills important for the professional specifics of library science – so either the student council was uninformed about the needs of this study field or proper discussion was not had to address it.

Considering other types of student council involvement (or lack thereof), Staff notes that this is difficult because the study field includes only part-time students who often do not meet full-time students, which was echoed at the meeting with students, of whom none had been in contact with the student council. As the student council is a representative of all the College students in such institutions as the College Board, it would be vital for the student council to be invited and encouraged to participate by the staff of the study field. The student council should also proactively

work to include part-time students in their field of representation – not necessarily by having students from this study field on their council, but by reaching out and analysing the wants and needs of this study field's student body and providing some forms of support for them as well. After the on-site visit, experts suggest developing and implementing some change management procedures to go along with the process of consolidation. As evidenced by conversations with academic staff and students, there is insufficient information available to them as to the current stage of consolidation and there is some trepidation and concern as to what the consolidation will mean for the academic staff (specifically regarding their employment) and students (regarding changes in study environment or resources).

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

The College has identified the infrastructure resources and material and technical support necessary for the implementation of the study field. All in all, the College has a rather good resource base and the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of the teaching and learning process, however notes that it has limited financial resources and over the reporting period has dedicated little financial investment in research, material and technical base, marketing and creativity. To offset this, a part of the resources are available at different partnering libraries or through their electronic services, which overall creates sufficient resources and also acts as an additional introduction of students to the variety of library systems and work, for the specific of the study field's only programme in library science.

#### **Strengths:**

1. The College's financial situation has been stabilised over the reporting period.
2. There is strong collaboration with other libraries to ensure sufficient resources and infrastructure, and good cooperation with the professional sector. The exposure to various partner library systems and collections brings additional value and variety to the students' study process and results.
3. The College regularly has cooperation projects with local and international partners in order to attract funding for applied research activities.
4. A strong positive outlook on the future consolidation with LAC and its advantages.
5. Strong library resources and a well-established Library collection policy.
6. The study field benefits from the resources of other established study fields related to arts and media, providing additional creative opportunities for students.
7. Well-integrated distance learning tools and methods in the study process, providing a hybrid model of both distance and in-person learning.
8. Good progress in transferring course content and additional materials to the digital study environment Moodle.
9. The College's academic staff are very good in practical knowledge.
10. Professional development events are organised according to the surveyed needs of the staff members. These events are well attended.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. The College is struggling financially to cover continuous development of the study field, its modernization, infrastructure and other provisions.
2. There is low academic and administrative staff remuneration.
3. A system for funding scientific or applied research and artistic creation is not clearly defined due to a lack of base funding for research.
4. The system for continuous improvement and acquisition of new provisions other than library resources is unclear.
5. The general condition of the building and the premises are physically worn out, and the

furnishings and environment are morally outdated. The most difficult situation is with the building's heating system during the winter period, which requires capital improvements.

6. The use of Moodle's features should be maximised to make content more user-friendly.

7. Unclear action plan on the long-term attraction of qualified teaching staff.

8. A mostly part-time workload for the College teaching staff might limit their availability, commitment and involvement in the study process, as well as their sense of belonging and identity with the College.

9. Lack of financial aid opportunities for students.

10. Insufficient information on the College's homepage for English speakers.

11. Weak collaboration with the officially elected student representatives.

12. Lack of information about the upcoming consolidation is creating concerns among the academic staff and students.

## **1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation**

### **Analysis**

1.4.1. After review of the SAR, it is evident that the directions of scientific research and applied research in the study field of Information and Communication Sciences at the College align well with the development goals of the institution and hold significant relevance for both the study field and the industry.

Relevance to College Development Goals: The College's long-term goal is to create an ecosystem of education, research, and artistic creativity to ensure sustainable development in Latvia based on culture and language [SAR, p. 4]. The College aims to provide a creative, modern, and sustainable environment for professionals in the cultural sector [SAR, p. 10]. The focus on applied research and integrated study processes aligns with the College's goal of preparing competitive specialists with future-oriented skills [SAR, p. 51]. The emphasis on digitization and open science principles also reflects the College's commitment to digital transformation and improving digital skills among academic and administrative staff [SAR, p. 51]. The College's priority goals for applied research, such as digitization of cultural heritage, data management, and environmental impact, directly contribute to achieving its strategic development directions.

Relevance to Industry and Study Field: The study field of Information and Communication Sciences is closely connected to the cultural institution and creative industries ecosystem. By integrating practical lessons and applied research relevant to the industry into the study process, the College ensures that its graduates are well-prepared to meet the needs of the labour market in the cultural sector [SAR, p. 4, 27, 51]. The College's focus on promoting in-depth learning of library and information competencies through applied research in Term and Qualification Papers enhances the students' abilities to contribute effectively to the industry [SAR, p. 11, 23, 27, 52].

Collaboration with Industry Experts: The College actively involves industry experts in the academic process, ensuring that the study programmes are updated according to the needs of the library industry [SAR, p. 9, 11, 28-29, 51-52, 63]. Collaboration with professional organisations and industry experts in the development of professional standards and research topics enhances the relevance of the study field and aligns it with the industry's current trends and challenges.

Challenges and Weaknesses: One of the challenges identified is the limited financial support for scientific research activities due to the College not being registered as a scientific institution [SAR, p. 51]. However, the College addresses this by encouraging academic staff to participate in national and international scientific and creative projects, seminars, and conferences, resulting in publications.

Quality Assurance and Improvement: The College has established a quality policy aimed at providing education and research of high quality that is open to artistic creativity and strives for excellence [SAR, p. 10, 15]. It regularly evaluates and updates study programmes, monitors study results, and

implements measures for improving the study process. The participation of academic staff in professional development events ensures continuous improvement of their competencies. The description of these aspects in the Self-Assessment Report was substantiated through observations and interviews conducted with management, academic staff, graduates, students, and employers.

In conclusion, the College's approach to integrating applied research, scientific activity, and artistic creativity into its study programme aligns with its development goals and the needs of the cultural sector and creative industries in Latvia. The emphasis on digital transformation, research-based student education, and collaboration with industry experts contribute to the sustainable development of the study field and industry.

1.4.2. Based on the provided SAR, it is evident that the connection between scientific research, applied research, and artistic creation is logical and justified in the study field. The study programmes at the College aim to equip students with balanced skills, including both general skills and specific knowledge relevant to the labour market. To achieve this, the College emphasises effective cooperation between academic staff, industry professionals, and development trends in the cultural field.

The integration of scientific and applied research into the study process is evident through various initiatives:

Research Methodology study course: Students are introduced to basic research knowledge through the mandatory study course "Research Methodology" [SAR, p. 52, 95].

Practical research in collaboration: In specialisation study courses, students engage in practical research in collaboration with academic or public libraries [SAR, p. 52]. This allows them to apply theoretical knowledge gained during the study process.

Term Paper and Qualification Paper: Theoretical knowledge is practically tested through the development of term papers and qualification papers. Academic staff and industry professionals guide students in this process, promoting the synergy of applied research and professional competencies [SAR, p. 52].

Involvement in external projects: The College actively participates in both national and international projects, such as the EU-funded project "Good DEEDs". Students are practically involved in research activities related to environmental impact and energy efficiency, creating cognitive material important for the cultural sector [SAR, p. 53].

Involvement of industry specialists: Leading specialists from the library industry and representatives from relevant faculties participate in the defence of Qualification Papers, evaluating students' applied research skills and providing professional opinions and recommendations [SAR, p. 52].

Integration of projects in the study programme: Project activities from "Good DEEDs" are integrated into the Environmental Protection study course, strengthening the connection between academic knowledge and real-world applications. Plans include integrating project activities into the "Library Science and Information" study programme [SAR, p. 53].

Collaboration with cultural sector organisations: The College collaborates with several organisations in the cultural sector, involving students in the practical study and presentation of research results relevant to the cultural field [SAR, p. 53].

Engagement in government initiatives: The College participates in the implementation of the State Employment Agency (NVA) measure, providing opportunities for students to be involved in academic, research, or administrative work [SAR, p. 53].

Masterclasses: The College offers master classes on creating contemporary cultural events, allowing students to gain knowledge from cultural figures and providing professionals in the field with the opportunity to enhance their practical skills [SAR, p. 53].

The statements in the SAR were confirmed by observations and interviews conducted with management, academic staff, graduates, students, and employers.

In conclusion, the study programme demonstrates a well-structured and comprehensive approach to integrating scientific research, applied research, and artistic creation into the study process across different levels and study programmes. The College's efforts in engaging students in real-world projects and involving them with industry professionals contribute to the development of well-rounded and competent graduates, prepared to meet future needs in the cultural and arts sectors.

1.4.3. Based on the provided SAR, it is evident that international cooperation in the field of scientific research, applied research, and artistic creation is not only ensured but purposefully developed at the College. The report highlights various aspects of international cooperation and the benefits it brings to both students and academic staff. The key points emphasised:

Clear objectives: The report emphasises that international cooperation is a precondition for the College's development. The goals include creating a new knowledge base, improving innovation capabilities, enhancing the institution's international reputation, and implementing a strategy-based internationalisation policy [SAR, p. 54].

Diverse cooperation initiatives: The College engages in various forms of international cooperation, such as participation in EU and EEA educational and research programmes, bilateral cooperation agreements, student and teacher exchange programmes, and involvement in international academic and professional cooperation networks [SAR, p. 54-56].

Extensive network of partners: The College has established long-term cooperation with several foreign institutions and organisations across different countries. These partnerships span various fields, including applied sciences, STEM, digitization of cultural services, and education in the e-environment [SAR, p. 54-56].

Project implementations: The College actively participates in international projects, such as ERASMUS+ initiatives. These projects cover diverse topics, including educational innovations, digital preservation of cultural heritage, and sustainability training, among others [SAR, p. 54-56].

Integration into study courses: International projects and conferences are seamlessly integrated into the study process. They serve as a part of study courses and allow students to participate in scientific discussions, present research, and receive feedback from experts and colleagues from different countries [SAR, p. 55-56]. This enhances students' scientific and applied research skills, presentation skills, and professional networking.

Collaborative research: The College collaborates with foreign partners on research topics, focusing on areas like digitization of art and cultural objects, tourism security and sustainability training, intercultural awareness, and inspiring students in STEAM through digital storytelling [SAR, p. 56].

Continued development: The College plans to continue its international cooperation efforts, attracting foreign specialists in the field of culture to projects and continuing education programmes. This promotes cooperation between different study areas and improves language skills and research methods use [SAR, p. 56].

Involvement of part-time students: International projects also involve part-time students, providing them with valuable experience in applied research and connecting their studies with their workplace institutions [SAR, p. 56].

The statements in the SAR were confirmed by observations and interviews conducted with management, academic staff, graduates, students, and employers.

In conclusion, the SAR and the results of the evaluation visit indicate a well-structured and purposeful approach to international cooperation within the study field and the relevant study programme. The College's efforts in fostering collaboration with foreign partners, engaging in diverse projects, and integrating these activities into the study process demonstrate a commitment to providing students with a global perspective, enhancing research capabilities, and contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the relevant fields.

1.4.4. Based on the SAR, it is evident that the College has indeed developed mechanisms for the

involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research, applied research, and artistic creation. The lecturers have been actively participating in various scientific and applied research projects, both at the national and international levels. They have also been engaged in presenting papers and attending conferences related to their field of expertise.

Examples of the lecturers' involvement in scientific and applied research include:

Participation in international projects: The teaching staff of the College has been actively involved in international projects, such as "DigiCult - Digital Preservation and Presentation of European Intangible Heritage", "TEAM-STAR - Digital and STEM Careers", and several others [SAR, p. 58-59]. This demonstrates the College's commitment to participating in research initiatives on a global scale.

Publication of research findings: Lecturers have published their research findings in reputable journals and publications, contributing to the dissemination of knowledge in their respective fields [SAR, p. 57-58].

Professional development workshops and courses: The College has organised professional development workshops and courses, providing opportunities for lecturers to enhance their research and teaching skills [SAR, p. 58].

Support for individual research: The College evaluates the potential of scientific activity and supports the individual work of lecturers in research, subject to financial constraints [SAR, p. 59].

The statements in the SAR were confirmed by observations and interviews conducted with management and academic staff.

However, the SAR also highlights some limitations in the current level of scientific activity. The College's scientific and applied research activities have been somewhat restricted due to the lack of funding and a lack of previously targeted and planned activities to promote research among lecturers. The College's plan to strengthen cooperation in the development of scientific activity and the formation of unified research teams, as well as the implementation of projects under the EU Recovery and Resilience Mechanism Plan, indicates a commitment to improving the situation in the coming years.

In conclusion, while the College has made significant progress in involving teaching staff in scientific research, applied research, and artistic creation, there is room for improvement. By addressing funding challenges and implementing planned activities, the College can further enhance its scientific activity and promote a more robust research culture among its faculty members.

1.4.5. Based on the provided SAR, it is evident that the College has developed mechanisms to promote the involvement of students in scientific research, applied research, and artistic creation. These mechanisms appear to be well-functioning and efficient, as the SAR highlights various ways in which students are actively engaged in research and development projects. Key points that demonstrate the College's efforts to promote student involvement in research and related activities include:

Qualification Papers: The study programme encourages students to conduct research as part of their Qualification Papers. The topics of these papers are diverse and cover various areas of library work and related branches, showcasing a practical application of theoretical knowledge and professional skills [SAR, p. 59-60].

Cooperation with libraries: Students conduct their research in cooperation with libraries, which ensures relevance and practicality. The Qualification Papers are often used by libraries as guidelines and methodical materials for planning and developing library services and resources [SAR, p. 60].

Involvement in industry projects: The College invites industry employers to participate in the development of student research topics, encouraging students to engage in research on current industry needs. This fosters a connection between academic studies and the labour market [SAR, p. 60].

Participation in external research: Students are involved in external research projects, such as the

College's research on institutional repositories of Latvian academic libraries, which indicates their active involvement in broader research initiatives beyond the College [SAR, p. 60].

Conference presentations and publications: Students' research findings are presented at conferences and submitted for publication, providing them with valuable exposure and recognition in the academic community [SAR, p. 60].

Academic year updates: The College regularly updates its requirements for Term Papers and Qualification Papers, emphasising the research component to further enhance students' research capabilities [SAR, p. 60].

These statements in the SAR were confirmed by observations and interviews conducted with management, academic staff, students, graduates and employers.

In conclusion, the SAR and interviews with students and academic staff showcase a well-rounded approach by the College to involve students in scientific research, applied research, and artistic creation. By providing opportunities for practical research, fostering industry collaboration, and promoting student contributions to external projects and conferences, the College has created a supportive environment for student research and creative activities.

1.4.6. Based on the provided SAR, it is evident that the College has implemented innovative solutions in the study field, and these innovations have a significant positive impact on the study process. The College's proactive approach to staying current with educational trends and responding to the changing needs of the labour market is commendable.

The report highlights several key areas where innovative solutions have been applied:

Lifelong learning and professional development: The College has developed professional further education courses both in person and online, providing opportunities for both students and professionals in the field of culture to enhance their skills and qualifications [SAR, p. 61, 64].

Inclusion of current topics: The College integrates content in its study and research process that corresponds to educational innovation trends, such as inclusion and diversity, digital transformation, and environment and climate change. This ensures that students are exposed to the latest developments and challenges in their field of study [SAR, p. 61].

Integration of artistic creativity: The College has integrated artistic creativity into the study process, allowing students to develop their soft skills and experience a multifunctional cultural space. Projects involving digital content production and performances demonstrate the College's commitment to fostering creativity and practical application of skills [SAR, p. 51, 62].

Technology-enriched study process: The College has made intensive efforts to transition to a technology-enriched study process, using online tools, smartboards, professional software, and e-study environments [SAR, p. 62]. This approach aligns with the needs of modern society and facilitates remote learning and communication with students.

Environment and climate change: The College is actively involved in international projects related to environmental protection, such as "GoodDEEDS". Integrating the results of such projects into study courses ensures that students are equipped with knowledge and skills related to sustainability and environmental responsibility [SAR, p. 62-63].

Digitization of cultural heritage: Through the involvement of lecturers in international projects like "DigiCult", the College integrates competencies in the digitization and preservation of intangible cultural heritage, contributing to the conservation and promotion of cultural assets [SAR, p. 63].

These statements in the SAR were confirmed by observations and interviews conducted with management, academic staff and students.

In conclusion, the College's innovative approach to the study process encompasses a wide range of areas, from technology integration to addressing contemporary issues like environmental protection and inclusivity. These efforts demonstrate a forward-thinking and proactive approach to education, providing students with valuable and relevant skills that align with the demands of the labour market and the needs of society. The College's commitment to lifelong learning and flexibility in

study offerings further enhances the positive impact of its innovative solutions on the overall study process.

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

The College's study field of Information and Communication Sciences demonstrates a strong alignment with the institution's development goals and holds significant relevance for both the study field and the industry. The College's emphasis on applied research, integration of artistic creativity, and technology-enriched study processes contribute to preparing competitive specialists with future-oriented skills. Collaboration with industry experts further enhances the relevance of the study field, while international cooperation fosters a global perspective and research capabilities. Challenges regarding funding for research activities are being addressed, and the College's commitment to quality assurance and improvement ensures continuous development in its study programmes. In sum, the College's approach showcases a well-structured and comprehensive strategy for promoting scientific research, applied research, and artistic creation among students and faculty, contributing to the sustainable development of the study field and the cultural sector in Latvia.

#### **Strengths:**

1. Alignment with College development goals: The study field's focus on applied research and integrated study processes aligns well with the institution's goal of creating a sustainable ecosystem of education, research, and artistic creativity based on culture and language. The College's emphasis on digitization and open science principles also reflects its commitment to digital transformation and improving digital skills among staff.
2. Relevance to industry: The College's integration of practical lessons and applied research relevant to the industry ensures that graduates are well-prepared to meet the needs of the labour market in the cultural sector. The emphasis on in-depth learning of library and information competencies through applied research enhances students' abilities to contribute effectively to the industry.
3. Collaboration with industry experts: The active involvement of industry experts in the academic process ensures that study programmes stay updated according to the needs of the library industry. Collaboration with professional organisations and experts in developing professional standards and research topics enhances the study field's relevance and alignment with industry trends and challenges.
4. International cooperation: The College's proactive approach to international cooperation, including participation in EU and EEA programmes, bilateral agreements, and involvement in international projects, strengthens its global perspective and research capabilities. It fosters collaboration between different study areas and improves language skills and research methods.
5. Innovation in the study process: The College's implementation of innovative solutions, such as lifelong learning opportunities, integration of current topics, artistic creativity, technology-enriched study processes, and digitization of cultural heritage, enhances the study process and prepares students for future challenges.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. Limited financial support for research: One of the identified challenges is the limited financial support for scientific research activities due to the College not being registered as a scientific institution. This may hinder the College's ability to carry out extensive research projects and initiatives.
2. Need for further faculty research development: While the College's teaching staff has been involved in scientific and applied research, there is room for improvement in promoting a more robust research culture. The lack of targeted and planned activities to promote research among lecturers has limited the level of scientific activity.

3. Addressing funding challenges: The financial constraints for research activities may impact the College's ability to fully support and implement various research projects. Addressing this issue is essential to strengthen scientific and applied research initiatives.

4. The ratio of academic and research workload of academic staff (90/10) is an obstacle for scientific research.

## **Assessment of the requirement [2]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The College's study field of Information and Communication Sciences aligns well with its development goals and industry needs. Emphasising applied research, artistic creativity, and technology-enriched study processes prepares future-ready specialists. Collaboration with industry experts and international cooperation enhance relevance and research capabilities. Challenges in research funding are being addressed, and the College's commitment to quality assurance ensures continuous improvement. The College's approach fosters scientific research, applied research, and artistic creation, contributing to sustainable development in the field and cultural sector in Latvia.

## **1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

### **Analysis**

1.5.1. Based on the SAR, it is evident that the College has a strong and successful cooperation with various institutions and organisations in Latvia, which significantly contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and relevant study programme. The cooperation partners are carefully selected based on specific features of the study field, and the main criteria for selection include reputation, professional experience, and active involvement in the cultural sector, as well as alignment with the specifics of the study field.

Key points highlighting the College's successful cooperation are the following:

Academic institutions: The College collaborates with Latvian universities, such as the University of Latvia and LAC, particularly the Faculty of Social Sciences and the academic staff of the study programme "Information Management". This cooperation involves guest lectures, teaching courses related to information management, and advisory support in updating study programme plans and content. Additionally, the College shares resources with LAC and engages in joint professional development seminars for academic staff [SAR, p. 63-64].

Industry associations and employers' organisations: The College actively participates in various industry associations, including the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Association of Latvian Event Producers, the Latvian Producers Union, and the Association of Technical Support Companies of the Latvian Event Industry, among others. Through these associations, students have opportunities to participate in creative activities organised by employers, receive practical training, and engage in professional further education programmes. Industry professionals also play a significant role in improving study fields and programmes, supervising and reviewing Qualification Papers, and evaluating students' work [SAR, p. 63].

Libraries and non-governmental organisations: The College has established close and successful cooperation with academic and public libraries, utilising them as practice places for students and involving them in the study programme's content and methods improvement. These libraries also serve as a base for applied research, further enhancing the learning experience [SAR, p. 64].

Working groups and Ministry collaboration: The College actively engages in working groups

organised by ministries and associations, such as the professional standard expert working group and the working group for the development of a solution for the consolidation of the Latvian Academy of Culture Agency "Latvian College of Culture at the Latvian Academy of Culture" with the LAC. Such involvement demonstrates the College's commitment to shaping and aligning the study field with national standards and requirements [SAR, p. 64].

The description of these aspects in the SAR was substantiated through observations and interviews conducted with management, academic staff, graduates, students, and employers.

In conclusion, the College's cooperation with various institutions and organisations in Latvia appears to be comprehensive and well-structured, enhancing the study field's relevance and quality. The involvement of industry professionals, employers, and experts from different sectors ensures that students are exposed to real-world challenges and up-to-date knowledge, ultimately preparing them for their future careers.

1.5.2. Based on the provided SAR, it is evident that the College actively cooperates with institutions from abroad, such as higher education institutions, employers' organisations, non-governmental organisations, and scientific institutes. This cooperation is well-aligned with the study field's strategic goals, aiming to prepare competitive specialists in the cultural sector with skills that correspond to future needs. The College's collaboration with international partners contributes significantly to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and relevant study programmes. It is understandably intensive to participate in international collaborations (and hence increase research activity but also develop the feeling of belonging in an international community), but this could be improved by joining the Research Data Alliance (RDA) or other research networks outside Latvia (e.g. OPERAS, DARIAH, EOSC), or via national collaborations (e.g. the National Library or the National Consortium). Such connections currently seem to be missing.

Key points highlighting the College's successful international cooperation are as follows:

1. Applied research and artistic creativity: The College engages in cooperation projects with foreign partners in the field of digitization, which are essential for the study field of "Information and Communication Sciences". These projects not only contribute to the development priority of "Digital Transformation" set by the College but also link the results of the projects to the study process [SAR, p. 65]. This integration of research outcomes into the study courses enhances the learning experience and ensures that students are exposed to the latest developments and trends in the field.

2. International scientific conferences: The College recognizes the importance of international scientific conferences as an integral part of the study process. These conferences provide students with opportunities to improve their applied research skills and promote professional networking [SAR, p. 65]. By participating in such conferences, students can stay updated on the problems and solutions in various fields of culture and art, thus helping them become competitive specialists with balanced skills.

3. International projects and good practice sharing: The College is involved in international projects such as TEAM-STAR, which has cooperation partners from various countries [SAR, p. 65]. Such projects offer opportunities for understanding different education systems and learning from good practices in other countries. This exposure to diverse perspectives contributes to the development of well-rounded professionals who can adapt to global challenges.

4. Criteria for selection of cooperation partners: The College follows specific criteria for selecting international cooperation partners. These criteria include compliance with the study field's activity specifics and the reputation of the potential partners. Priority is given to partners with involvement in scientific and applied research activities, artistic creativity, projects, conferences, and methodical measures, which align with the main directions of cooperation [SAR, p. 65].

5. Attracting new cooperation partners: The College seeks to attract new cooperation partners who can contribute to the implementation of the College's development directions. Emphasis is placed

on opportunities for exchange or transfer of experience, particularly in areas that may not have been within the College's previous experience. For example, cooperation in the development and implementation of digital services and understanding international business processes in the cultural field is considered beneficial [SAR, p. 65-66].

These statements in the SAR were confirmed by observations and interviews conducted with management, academic staff and students.

In conclusion, the College's cooperation with institutions from abroad is well-planned and strategic, contributing significantly to the enhancement of the study field and the relevant study programmes. By collaborating with international partners, the College ensures that its students are well-prepared to meet the demands of the cultural sector, adapt to emerging trends, and become competitive specialists with versatile skills that align with future needs.

1.5.3. Based on the provided SAR, it is evident that the College has developed a system and procedures for the attraction of teaching staff and students from abroad within the study field through the implementation of Erasmus+ projects KA103 and KA107. However, the effectiveness of the system seems to face some challenges in terms of both incoming and outgoing mobility of students in the study programme "Library Science and Information". Regarding Erasmus + programmes like BIP in KA131 programmes, new opportunities could also be considered and strategically planned for the future. For example, perhaps one or two of the general education study courses in part A [Annex 24], which are essential and sometimes co-taught to the University of Latvia, could be taught in English so that could attract more students via incoming mobility.

Key points regarding the College's efforts and challenges in attracting teaching staff and students from abroad are as follows:

1. Outgoing mobility: The College has facilitated outgoing mobility for its teaching staff, with 4 out of 10 lecturers participating in 8 Erasmus+ mobilities, including both teaching and experience exchange mobilities. The lecturers who participated in these mobilities have reported significant benefits, including improved professional knowledge and skills, exposure to innovative teaching methods at partner universities, and the opportunity to establish long-term collaborative relationships [SAR, p. 66-67].

2. Incoming mobility: The report highlights challenges related to incoming mobility of students to the study programme [SAR, p. 66]. Several factors contribute to the limited incoming mobility, including the study programme's part-time presence format, which makes it difficult for full-time exchange students to participate. Additionally, the study years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 were affected by unpredictable epidemiological regulations, leading to remote study arrangements, further reducing the opportunities for incoming mobility. Moreover, the discrepancy between the College's educational qualification level and the incoming mobility level, which mostly corresponds to the bachelor's level, may also impact the attractiveness of the study programme for foreign students [SAR, p. 66].

3. Coordinator and cooperation agreements: The College has taken steps to address the challenges and improve mobility opportunities. In the study year 2022/2023, a full-time Erasmus project coordinator has resumed work at the College, renewing cooperation agreements with previous Erasmus+ project partners and identifying new study and practice places. This effort has resulted in an increase in incoming and outgoing mobilities in other programmes [SAR, p. 66].

4. Motivation and support: The College provides all necessary support and assistance in implementing teacher mobility, and lecturers are motivated to participate in Erasmus+ mobilities for various reasons, including improving pedagogical competencies, understanding different practices and education systems, promoting international openness, and enhancing language and digital competences [SAR, p. 66-67].

5. Part-time students' engagement: One of the challenges mentioned is convincing part-time students to use Erasmus+ mobility opportunities for professional development. As most part-time

students are full-time employees and have family commitments, the feasibility of mobility options may be limited for them [SAR, p. 66].

These statements in the SAR were confirmed by observations and interviews conducted with management, academic staff and students.

In conclusion, the College's efforts to attract teaching staff and students from abroad through the Erasmus+ programme are commendable, and the participation of teaching staff in outgoing mobility has been successful. However, there are challenges to address, particularly in increasing the incoming mobility of students to the study programme "Library Science and Information". By continuing to work on overcoming these challenges, the College can further enhance the implementation of the study process and the quality of studies through international cooperation and mobility opportunities.

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

The College's cooperation with institutions within Latvia and abroad is commendable, promoting a comprehensive approach to enhancing the study field's relevance and quality. The careful selection of partners based on reputation and experience ensures students face real-world challenges and stay updated on knowledge, preparing them effectively for their careers. Within Latvia, the College collaborates with academic institutions, industry associations, employers' organisations, libraries, NGOs, and ministries, aligning the study field with national standards. Active participation in working groups enriches the learning experience. Internationally, the College engages with foreign universities, employers, NGOs, and institutes, benefiting students' skills and global understanding. The outgoing mobility for teaching staff is supported by a full-time Erasmus coordinator. Addressing incoming mobility challenges is crucial, given the study programme's part-time format and pandemic impact. The College's commitment to teacher mobility emphasises its dedication to education quality. In conclusion, the College's proactive cooperation with various institutions contributes significantly to strategic goals, preparing competitive specialists. Continuous efforts to address challenges and expand incoming mobility opportunities will enhance education quality further.

#### **Strengths:**

1. Strong cooperation within Latvia: The College's collaboration with various institutions and organisations in Latvia is well-structured and comprehensive. The careful selection of partners based on specific features of the study field ensures a focused and relevant approach to education.
2. Diverse cooperation partners: The College's partnerships with academic institutions, industry associations, employers' organisations, libraries, non-governmental organisations, and ministries enrich the study field by providing practical opportunities for students and aligning the study field with national standards.
3. Involvement of industry professionals: The College actively engages industry professionals, employers, and experts, providing students with exposure to real-world challenges and up-to-date knowledge, which enhances their preparation for future careers.
4. Strategic international cooperation: The College's international cooperation aligns with the study field's strategic goals, preparing competitive specialists in the cultural sector with skills that correspond to future needs.
5. Participation in international projects and conferences: Engaging in international projects and conferences allows students to stay updated on the latest developments and trends in the field and acquire diverse perspectives.
6. Clear criteria for partner selection: The College follows specific criteria for selecting international cooperation partners, ensuring alignment with the study field's activity specifics and reputation.
7. Active efforts to attract cooperation partners: The College seeks to attract new cooperation

partners by emphasising the exchange of experience in areas beyond its previous experience, promoting the development and implementation of digital services, and understanding international business processes in the cultural field.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Challenges in incoming mobility: The College faces challenges in attracting incoming mobility students to the study programme "Library Science and Information". Factors such as the part-time presence format, pandemic impact, and discrepancy in educational qualification levels may hinder foreign students' attraction to the study programme.
2. Limited participation in incoming staff mobility: The report indicates a lack of incoming mobility during the reporting period, which may impact the diversity and international exposure of the study programme.
3. Part-time students' engagement: Convincing part-time students to use Erasmus+ mobility opportunities for professional development is considered a challenge, given their full-time employment and family commitments.
4. Impact of pandemic on mobility: Unpredictable epidemiological regulations and remote study arrangements during the pandemic have affected mobility opportunities for both outgoing and incoming students.
5. International cooperation for internship opportunities is quite limited and has not been developed in a systematic way.
6. Collaboration and participation in international research or industry networks is weak.
7. Lack of extraversion in communicating the strengths of the study course (e.g. capitalising on the visibility of their website, incorporating the social media tools they use for their communication for publicising the course (e.g. use MS Teams, Facebook, Instagram, etc. to point to the website content)).

### Assessment of the requirement [3]

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

#### **Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The College demonstrates strong cooperation and internationalisation efforts with various institutions both within Latvia and abroad. The involvement of industry professionals and diverse partners enriches the study field and prepares students for future careers. However, there are challenges to address, particularly in increasing incoming mobility and overcoming the impact of the pandemic on mobility opportunities. By focusing on these areas, the College can further enhance the quality of its international cooperation and mobility programmes.

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

#### Analysis

1.6.1. The College evaluates that it has implemented 20 measurable actions in response to the 24 recommendations received during previous accreditation and study programme licensing, and partially implemented the remaining 9 actions planned. It is commendable that in order to resolve complex issues, the College has initiated several solutions to one recommendation, for example, improving their study environment and methodological materials was improved by both strengthening external cooperations with the National Library of Latvia and Riga Central Library and improving internal procedures, digitising study materials on a new e-study platform and

implementing more practice-based studies.

Some essential components of the quality assurance process as data collection via anonymous student and academic staff surveys have also been implemented in this period, however, preceding experts pointed out the need to implement data collection of all stakeholders' opinions, which should also include the work of non-academic staff.

Partially implemented actions are progressing according to their planned implementation period, e.g. implementation of systems that are expected to come with the process of consolidation (new electronic document system, acquisition of research funds, major changes in homepage), or show promising results even if in a different direction (notable improvement of international project participation, although long-term partnerships are still a work in progress).

There have been several recommendations regarding the improvement of the College's homepage in English, and these are noted as partially fulfilled in 2021. Some improvements have been made and information regarding the study programme "Library Science and Information" is available, however, the homepage still lacks vital information. Further analysis of experts' opinions on this can be read under criterion 1.3.8.

The recommendation implementation overview also notes that a repository of student works has been developed and a full-text database of student theses with high evaluations has been established since 2021. However, during the experts' visit, it was discovered that only 7 theses from this study programme have been added to the repository since its creation and it was actively updated during the visit. Experts urge the College to complete its digital collection to enable real use of it in the future.

There are areas that have good improvement and where work should be continued, most notably staff English language skills and research intensity. Significant improvements that have positively impacted the study programme are changes in the study programme's content (more information literacy, digital communications, research methodology, cultural heritage and contemporary literature content), the creation of an anonymous student surveying system, the establishment of the Study Program Council, the seemingly successful combination of distance and in-person learning in all study courses and the almost complete implementation of digital study materials and other uses of the Moodle system.

Overall experts evaluate recommendations as taken into account and proactively responded to.

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

The College has made progress in implementing most of the recommendations received from previous accreditation and study programme licensing. It has improved its study environment, methodological materials, data collection, international project participation, and study programme content. It has also created an anonymous student surveying system, a Study Program Council, and a repository of student works. Some actions are still partially implemented or need further improvements, such as the homepage in English, the use of the repository, the staff's English language skills and the research intensity, but the College displays sufficient willingness to continue further work on these issues. The experts commend the College for its proactive response to the recommendations and urge it to continue its work in the areas that need more attention. It is notable that the upcoming period with the expected changes in the College may change the direction of or vastly improve some of the planned development trajectories.

Strengths:

1. Complex approach to problem-solving by considering several directions of improvement for the implementation of one recommendation.
2. Partially implemented actions show a reasonable timeline and goals.
3. Significant improvements have had a notable influence and represent a positive development

trend in the study field.

Weaknesses:

1. Some implemented actions present an incomplete improvement of the situation and only a partial understanding of recommendations (e.g. staff surveying, English homepage, thesis repository).

## Assessment of the requirement [4]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

All recommendations have been addressed, most are implemented or partially implemented with a final date later in the future. Some points need further improvements, but preliminary work has been done.

## 1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

Add mention of the academic ethics and integrity topics that are reviewed during the study course "Methodology of Research" in its course description.

Develop evaluation principles for candidates that are considered for admission in the programme to include the results of previously gained education, professional experience, and motivation assessment.

Add qualitative data gathering (interviews) to the statistical data gathered for evaluating students' experience.

Make improvements to the College's homepage in English and improve the user experience.

Explore and expand the use of features provided by Moodle to improve the digital study environment.

Establish regular information channels for disseminating information about the consolidation procedure to the academic staff and students, alleviating their concerns regarding the impact on their work/studies, e.g. scheduled meetings.

The College should actively seek partnerships with other scientific institutions, research centres, and industry partners to access additional funding for research projects. Establish a system for research funding acquisition.

The College should conduct workshops, seminars, and training sessions to foster a research-oriented culture among its faculty members. These programmes should focus on research methodologies, grant proposal writing, and disseminating research findings, empowering lecturers to engage in meaningful scientific research.

The College should create a dedicated office or committee responsible for identifying and applying for external research grants and funding opportunities. This proactive approach can alleviate financial constraints and enable the successful implementation of research projects.

The College should reevaluate the academic and research workload distribution among academic staff. Reducing the academic load and increasing the research responsibilities will allow faculty members to dedicate more time and effort to scientific research.

Recognise the challenges faced by part-time students and design flexible mobility options that accommodate their work and family commitments. This could include shorter mobility periods, part-time study options abroad, or virtual exchange programmes.

Strengthen partnerships with foreign universities and educational institutions to increase the flow of incoming mobility students.

Review previously received recommendations and how they fit with recommendations received during this accreditation. Evaluate the connections and more significant possible solutions on issues that have been persistent over these reviewed periods.

## **Long-term recommendations**

Create a long-term plan for the acquisition of overall additional financial resources and where they may be allocated for the continuous development of the study field, staff remuneration.

Establish a clear system for continuous improvement and acquisition of new provisions other than library resources.

Create a long-term plan for the improvement of the physical resources – the available premises or their alternatives.

Establish a system/action plan for the future attraction of qualified teaching staff.

Plan and implement activities that may regularly improve the academic staff's commitment and involvement in the study programme development, as well as their sense of belonging and identity with the College.

Explore opportunities to attract funding specifically for financial aid for students (e.g. for targeted scholarships by employers, publishing houses etc.).

Improve the future collaboration with the elected student representatives. Provide opportunities for them to convey opinions on the study field and programme during the next evaluation period.

Cultivate strong ties with alumni and industry partners to create a network of support for research initiatives. Engaging with successful graduates and industry professionals can lead to mentorship opportunities, research collaborations, and potential funding sources.

Create a dedicated research centre within the College to coordinate and facilitate research activities. The centre can focus on securing grants, organising conferences, and promoting interdisciplinary research, fostering a vibrant research environment.

Allocate funds to enhance research infrastructure, such as laboratories, equipment, and technology resources. Providing researchers with access to state-of-the-art facilities can significantly impact the quality and scope of research undertaken.

Engage with alumni who have participated in mobility programmes and encourage them to share their positive experiences. Alumni testimonials and success stories can serve as powerful tools to attract more students to the study programme.

Jointly develop exchange programmes and ensure a smooth credit transfer process to encourage students to choose the study programme.

Focus on improving the academic reputation and quality of the study programme. This can be achieved through continuous study programme evaluation, curriculum updates, and faculty development initiatives, which will attract more international students seeking quality education.

To enhance continuous quality improvement in education and research, take a systematic approach: form a quality assurance team with diverse perspectives; set clear quality metrics and standards; regularly self-assess educational processes; gather stakeholder feedback; benchmark against peers; use data-driven decision-making; launch continuous improvement projects; develop faculty via training; foster innovation; seek external peer reviews; maintain transparent communication; allocate resources.

Actively promote diversity and inclusivity within the College community. Encourage interaction between domestic and international students, and create a welcoming atmosphere that encourages cross-cultural exchange.

Look into opportunities to provide international internship options to students.

Encourage faculty members from different disciplines to collaborate on research projects. Interdisciplinary research can lead to innovative solutions and attract more funding from diverse sources.

Collaborate with libraries, information centres, and relevant industries to offer internships and professional development opportunities for both domestic and international students. Real-world experience and networking opportunities will enhance the study programme's appeal to potential mobility students.

Consider the development opportunities provided by joining an international research or industry network.

## **II - "Library Science and Information" ASSESSMENT**

### **II - "Library Science and Information" ASSESSMENT**

#### **2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme**

##### **Analysis**

2.1.1. The study programme corresponds to the current national standard for first-level short-cycle professional higher education and the requirements set out in the Law on Professional Education for the College as a higher professional education institution and in the 2017 Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 322. as also stated in SAR [SAR, p. 75]

The study programme complies with the study field. As stated by SAR, the strategic goal of the study field "Information and Communication Sciences" is to prepare competent specialists with knowledge and skills corresponding to the specifics of the library and information field, promoting the growth of students into enterprising, creative, responsible and competitive members of society [SAR, p. 76]. In accordance with this strategic goal, the study programme "Library Science and Information" aims at preparing modernly educated, professionally competent, competitive library information specialists to work in state and 77 local government institutions, private institutions and non-governmental organisations, motivated to engage in innovative creativity and research related to the preservation of cultural heritage. This goal of the study programme corresponds to the goal of the study field [SAR, p. 76-77]. In conclusion, the study programme "Library Science and Information" is compliant with the study field.

2.1.2. The title of the study programme along with the professional qualification reflects its content and focus. The study programme code 41322 corresponds to the short-cycle professional higher education and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 of June 13, 2017 "Regulations on the Classification of Latvian Education" of the thematic field of education "Social Sciences, Business Studies and Law" thematic field of "Information and Communication Sciences" and group of educational programmes "Knowledge of libraries, information and archives".

The duration and the scope of the study programme correspond to the needs of students who often have professional experience and are eager to combine studies with work in the profession in various libraries in Latvia [SAR, p.78].

While the choice to offer the study programme in Latvian seems to be obvious considering the location of the main pool of potential students, experts are concerned about the limiting aspects of such a choice from the point of view of further internationalisation of the study field. The long-term competitiveness of the study programme should be considered e.g. when developing the College's international environment for the majority of students who are not able to actively participate in international exchange due to their work duties.

In conclusion, The title, code, degree to be obtained, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. The duration and scope of the study programme are justified, however, the long-term competitiveness and the number of students could benefit, if the College would consider opening the study programme's equivalent in the English language.

2.1.3. As a result of the previous evaluation procedure, the code of the study programme was changed, and the new study field accreditation sheet for the study programme was issued to renew the specified code: 41322 - knowledge of libraries, information and archives. The new code is more in line with the content of the study programme, instead of the previous code 41321 - journalism and communication [SAR, p.75]. Additionally, the proportion of study courses in information literacy, cultural development and digital literacy has been increased in the content of the study programme, which is now supplemented by study courses "Cultural Heritage", "Introduction to Modern Literature", and "Digital Educational and Research Resources". In the study plan, the scope of the study course "Management of Cultural Events" has been increased from 1 CP to 2 CP [SAR, p.76].

Experts see the aforementioned changes to the study programme's parameters as being relevant and corresponding to the current trends of the knowledge and skills necessary for the field of profession.

In conclusion, experts support the changes in parameters done as a result of the previous evaluation procedure.

2.1.4. The programme is student self-funded. The dynamics of the number of students during the reporting period have been relatively small albeit stable [SAR, p. 76, Table 7].

SAR describes the economic and social justification of the study programme as being based on the regular research of the labour market and the analysis of the employment of the College graduates. Data show that graduates provide significant contributions to the industry and the entire sector. However, the expert visit confirmed the most involvement with the public libraries and less involvement with the academic libraries and the private sector.

It is a rather common phenomenon that they occupy managerial positions at their workplace, thus confirming the quality of the study programme. Employment indicators illuminate that before and also during the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 80% of graduates were employed, mostly in relation to their field of study. Most of the graduates are able to start working with not much additional training and most of the employers are satisfied with their knowledge and skills [SAR, p. 79]. It can be concluded that the study programme is economically and socially justified, especially, when it comes to the graduates' contribution to the sector of public libraries in Latvia.

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

The study programme "Library Science and Information" is compliant with the study field. The title, code, degree to be obtained, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. The duration and scope of the study programme are justified, however, the long-term competitiveness and the number of students could benefit, if the College would consider opening the study programme's equivalent in the English language. The study programme is economically and socially justified, especially, when it comes to the graduates' contribution to the sector of public libraries in Latvia.

Strengths:

1. Economical and social contribution of the graduates to the sector of public libraries in Latvia.

Weaknesses:

1. Latvian as the only language of implementation can restrict the pool of potential students and long-term competitiveness.

## **2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof**

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. According to the SAR [SAR, p. 75-77] and the provided documentation on the compliance of the study programme with the professional standard, mapping of the study courses, the curriculum of the study programme, course descriptions, and practice regulations [SAR, Annexes 23-27), the content of the study courses corresponds to the aim, goal and planned objectives of the study programme "Library Science and Information". It takes into account the responsibilities and professional qualifications approved in the library sector in 2021 [one-site visit], the current developments in the new professional standard (to be finalised in 2023) as well as the recommendations of the experts' group in the accreditation study that took place in 2021.

The study courses are grouped into three parts:

- Part A – general education study courses,
- Part B – mandatory and elective industry courses and
- Part C – specialisation industry courses.

Study courses and study modules generally form the compulsory, limited elective and elective parts of study programmes, with Part C representing the fully elective courses. The mandatory content of first-level professional higher education courses has historically consisted of general education courses (humanities, social sciences, natural, technical and information technologies) and industry training courses, which are separated into compulsory, elective and specific professional training courses [MoC No 141 "Regulations regarding the State Standard for First Level Professional Higher Education"]. The MoC No 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education" (adopted on 13.06.2023.) also notes that a short cycle professional higher education study programme like this one should include compulsory courses (so general education), elective and only if necessary, limited elective courses, and industry specialisation courses ("courses necessary for acquiring professional competence"), however, it should be noted, that the College has submitted the SAR before the adoption of these regulations and should be in line with the Cabinet Regulation No. 141 "Regulations regarding the State Standard for First Level Professional Higher Education".

The completion of the study comprises the students' practice and the qualification paper.

The courses provide theoretical knowledge and approaches as well as directions of the development of library science and information management. Furthermore, they provide knowledge of librarian work processes and practical skills in classifying information resources, creating indexes, understanding the importance of bibliographic description in the process of organising information in libraries, etc. The course "Basics of Law and Copyright" gives the knowledge of the fundamental principles of law, the regulatory framework of key legislation, and the ability to find, analyse and apply legal norms. According to discussions during the on-site visit, the knowledge and skills previously mentioned are highly rated by the students, graduates and employers.

To ensure the relevance of the study programme and compliance with today's requirements and needs of the sector and society but also taking into consideration the recommendations of the experts' group in the accreditation study in 2021 the following study courses complemented the study programme [SAR, p. 76]:

- "Cultural heritage", which provides students with competencies in identifying, documenting and researching the values of the local cultural environment corresponding to their professional duties;
- "Introduction to Modern Literature", which was initiated by employers and graduates and includes knowledge of the principles and criteria of evaluating fiction today, and provides students with a structured idea of the current trends in literature in Latvia;
- "Digital educational and research resources", which provides competencies on the exchange of research information in science and open access information resources;

The expert group discussions with the employers also stressed the necessity for more pedagogical training and for training, which addresses the information needs of different user groups (e.g. children, people with disabilities, etc.)

#### 2.2.2. N/A.

2.2.3. According to the information provided in the SAR [p. 85-87], the evaluation methods used in the implementation of the study programme comprise a variety of assessment forms (introductory, intermediate, regular, final), written and oral examinations after the completion of the study course. The type of evaluation for a final examination of the study course, evaluation criteria and other types of assessment are specified in the description of the study course.

During the on-site visit discussions with the academic staff and the students, it was stressed that together with the results of the evaluation, students also regularly receive feedback and guidance from the teaching staff on how to improve knowledge and skills in the study course and to achieve the learning outcomes. The small number of students helps to provide the student-centred education process where teaching staff acts as mentors providing psychological support to students (encouraging them to use new skills and technologies, work in a new field outside the usual comfort zone, taking initiatives, systematically learning and improving academic skills) [on-site visit].

Some examples of the forms of study in the study programme are face-to-face lectures, seminars, consultations, and independent work. Creative works, experiments and cooperative lessons are encouraged [SAR, p. 87].

Learning outcomes are achieved with relevant study implementation methods and necessary emphasis on practical and/or individual work, thus, allowing for assessment of the individual progress, especially, in the specialisation courses [SAR, Annex 25].

In conclusion, experts see study implementation methods as being closely related to the aims and outcomes of the study courses and program with a strong emphasis on a student-centred approach to teaching and learning.

2.2.4. The College has established Practice Regulations (approved 2019) that explain the goals and assignments of the internship, the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders involved, and the criteria and procedure for preparing and submitting practice reports, as well as evaluating the

results of the practice [Annex 27].

The planning of internships and the topics of internship assignments are designed in accordance with the results obtained in the study programme and the competencies of the students, which correspond to the duties and tasks of the profession of "Library information specialist" [SAR, p. 90]. The process is administratively managed by the director of the study programme, who is in charge of updating internship aims, tasks, and potential internship placements, while the information and evaluation are provided respectively by the lecturers responsible for each internship. This is all available for view and control on the internship e-platform <https://edy365.com/>, which the College has begun implementing to digitize and improve internship management. Students are free to choose their places of practice according to their personal preferences, and this also can include their existing workplace. A list of organisations is provided in case a student does not have a preference but would like the College to provide options [SAR, p. 88]. It should be noted that international internships have not been realised at the College, although several interns from Lithuania have been accepted from abroad [on-site visit]. Foreign internships for local students may face the same challenges as any other outgoing mobility opportunities, as described under criterion 1.5.3. Overall, experts evaluate that the current management and planning of the internships are well-organised and effective.

The majority of library science students prefer to do their internship in public libraries run by the local government. Between 2020 and 2022, almost three out of four students chose this option. University and college libraries were also popular, but not as much as public libraries. School and special libraries, such as those for museums or archives, were the least preferred by the students. [SAR, p. 88]. This suggests that public libraries are the most accessible and attractive places for library science students to gain practical experience. They may offer more opportunities for learning different aspects of library work, such as user service, information provision, collection management, and event organization. University and college libraries may also appeal to students who are interested in academic or research-oriented library work. However, schools and special libraries may have more specific requirements or challenges that deter some students from choosing them as their internship sites, as was also highlighted during the on-site visit.

The goal of the first internship is to learn how to manage the inventory, assembly and processing of the collection. Students get to know the work planning documents that guide the collection management, the collection acquisition process at the internship site, the cataloguing skills in the library information system, and the practical work with the collection organisation. They also learn about the inventory and write-off processes of the collection [SAR, p. 88].

The second internship is at the end of the third semester. This internship helps students learn how to serve users and provide information services, as well as how to organise events and exhibitions for library users. The main part of this internship involves working with users of a library or information institution, enhancing information search skills and providing information services to others [SAR, p. 89].

At the end of the fourth semester, students participate in their third internship, which focuses on the organisation, planning and management of library work. The aim of this is to consolidate, enhance and apply the theoretical knowledge that they have gained from the study programme, as well as to develop professional skills in organising, planning and managing library work. Students also have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with and comprehend the internal regulatory documents and the planning and development documents of the library work, as well as to contribute to the promotion and publicity of library services [SAR, p. 89].

The fourth and final internship session, which takes place at the end of the fifth semester, aims to help gather the information needed for Qualification Papers. Students learn how to use both printed and digital information resources, such as professional literature and publications of the library industry. They conduct research in collaboration with a library of their choice and address current topics and problems in the field. Qualification Papers summarise the latest theoretical and empirical

findings of the library and information industry, based on the knowledge, skills and competencies that students have acquired from the study programme [SAR, p. 60, 89].

Overall, the content of the internships is relevant and related to the planned learning outcomes of the study programme. It also complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments.

#### 2.2.5. N/A.

2.2.6. "The "Regulations for Qualification Examinations" of the College specify the development, requirements and assessment procedure of the Qualification Paper [SAR, p. 23].

The students select innovative topics for their Term Papers and Qualification Papers, which reflect the current trends and challenges in the field of library and information science. Some examples of such topics in 2023 are: "Development of academic libraries' e-resources offer in the context of open science", "Virtual exhibitions offer and trends in Latvian libraries", "Students' reading habits and strategies", and "Public libraries creation of digital resource and service offer" [SAR, p. 94]. The topics of students' final theses are clearly relevant to the study field and correspond to the study programme.

The director of the study programme ensures the relevance of the topics by updating them periodically based on the feedback from the industry and employers (last done in 2023, 2021, 2019). The Qualification Paper is developed during the Qualification practice, where the students receive support from the selected library in terms of information resources, data collection, and quality evaluation. This way, the Qualification Paper is linked to the practical issues and needs of the industry, and the research results can be applied in real situations [SAR, p. 92].

The analysis of the Qualification Papers' evaluations in the reporting period shows that most of them were of high quality, as 73% of them received a rating of "very good" or higher from the Qualification Examination Commission (compared to 60% in the previous reporting period) [SAR, p. 93].

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

The content of the study programme is topical and corresponds to the aim, goal and planned objectives of the study programme "Library Science and Information". The methods applied include approaches that ensure a student-centred approach, and this is further possible because of the small number of students. The study programme has a strong practical component and its four internships bring valuable competencies to the students. The knowledge and skills acquired during the study programme such as classification, indexing, bibliographic description and basics of law are highly rated by the students, graduates and employers. Students are scoring well. New study courses have also been implemented in response to employer and graduate commentary about cultural heritage, contemporary literature and digital resources. Discussions point out the need for more pedagogical skills among librarians.

#### Strengths:

1. There is a good balance between the specialised study courses for library and information specialists, and industry and general theoretical study courses.
2. Excellently defined course descriptions.
3. Management appears to maintain the impetus and act proactively where industry/sector needs emerge (e.g. professional standard implementation requirements into the curriculum, interactions with stakeholders).
4. There is a constant education system, professional market, and labour market research that has resulted in the introduction of current study courses, and the modernization of existing ones.
5. Development of methodological provision – Yearly

6. Preparation, distribution and development of teaching material sets for study courses is done yearly.
7. Relevant and effective Practice Regulations, that establish clear procedures before, during and after internships.
8. Freedom of choice for internships during their studies, including the opportunity to work in cooperation with the students' established workplaces.
9. The content of the internships is relevant and related to the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
10. The employers are involved in discussing the content of the internship.
11. The internship providers are satisfied with the knowledge and skills of the students of the study programme.

#### Weaknesses:

1. More pedagogical training that addresses the information needs of different user groups (e.g. children, people with disabilities, etc.) is needed.
2. Students choosing their own workplace as the place of internship may be at risk of improving their practical skills less than their peers.
3. No international internships have been done, as students face challenges taking on international mobility.
4. Schools and special libraries (museums and archives) impose additional challenges that the students may not be prepared to tackle during an internship.

### **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

Not applicable.

## **2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme**

### **Analysis**

2.3.1. Students and lecturers of the study field "Information and Communication Sciences" can access the study and research resources that are available in the College library and in collaboration with LAC, the Latvian National Library, the Library of the University of Latvia and other libraries. The library has a collection, facilities and premises that meet the needs of the study field. The library's material and technical condition is assessed according to MK No. 395 "Material and technical basic norms of libraries" [SAR, p. 37–38].

The College library and the e-study environment Moodle give access to the information resources needed for studies. Printed and electronic resources from the College library, e-books and publications from the Latvian National Library, and the Open Access resources that are available online can all be used [SAR, p. 49]. There is an established Collection policy of the library collection (approved in 2019) [Annex 28], which also includes collection priorities for the period 2019–2022 – these should be updated.

The study programme greatly benefits from the availability of resources that are established for other study fields and programmes, such as a fully functional photo studio, video editing room, sound recording studio, music studio, dance hall and additional service rooms for artistic endeavours [SAR, p. 34]. Additionally, there is a conference hall and two computer rooms with 15 workstations

each, fully equipped with various software for their project development (photo, video, sound processing software, MS Project, Adobe InDesign, WordPress). These resources provide additional opportunities for students to develop creative projects and theses that demonstrate their competencies and skills and also earn valuable event organization skills needed for library work.

There are limited financial resources for updating and purchasing equipment, information resources, software, and licences that are necessary for the modernization and digitalization of the study process, however, the provisions are evaluated as sufficient. The College relies on external cooperation and support from other institutions, such as the National Library of Latvia, to provide access to additional resources [SAR, p. 16–17], however, due to the high quality of this collaboration, it is possible to provide sufficient resources and studies.

Further analysis of overall resources can be seen in Chapter 1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field, especially under criteria 1.3.2. and 1.3.3., as the resources of the study field accommodate only one study programme in the field.

#### 2.3.2. N/A.

2.3.3. The College has a method to calculate how much money it needs to run the study field and the related study programme, but it is not clear if it can afford to buy the materials and resources that are needed for a good quality study process.

The study fee is quite high, and the students who study part-time cannot get any state funding, so there are no budget places for them. The state and the local government do not support (with money, scholarships, loans) the development of library workers at the level of professional short-cycle higher education [SAR, p. 16–17]. This situation presents a challenge and a problem for both the students and the library workers. The high study fees and lack of state funding for part-time students may deter some individuals from pursuing higher education, especially those who have to balance work or family obligations. This may restrict their career prospects and lower their earning potential. It may also result in a mismatch between the supply and demand of qualified library workers in the country, as well as affect the quality and diversity of library services. The government insufficiently appreciates or acknowledges the role and contribution of library workers to society and the economy. It may also indicate a lack of investment and innovation in the library sector, which could affect its sustainability and competitiveness in the digital age.

The source of financial support for the College study programme “Library Science and Information” is student self-financing. (The tuition fee from the academic year 2022/2023 is set at EUR 1500 per academic year for all part-time full-time or full-time part-time study programmes). The calculation of the necessary financial security for the implementation of the study programme has been carried out, in which the costs are classified as follows: 1. Remuneration of academic and administrative staff; 2. Costs of services (costs of communication services, information systems, etc.); 3. Costs of materials, energy resources and inventory (costs of building maintenance, costs of purchasing teaching aids and materials, costs of purchasing books and magazines, costs of equipment and inventory) [SAR, p. 33]. The costs altogether mean that a minimum of 32 students are necessary to ensure the profitability of this study programme to provide for the very basics of the study process, excluding further development and research costs that have not been covered so far [SAR, p. 97].

The College has faced a financial challenge – to meet the schedule of deferred tax payments of the previous period, it implemented a maximum austerity regime, which especially affected the improvement of the College’s material and technical base and study environment, research and creativity, as well as marketing activities. The funding for ensuring the aforementioned processes was inadequate, and other management processes were financed to a minimal extent. This also had an impact on the College’s image and reputation [SAR, p. 67]. The financial resources available to the study programme are overall minimal and have so far not contributed to major improvements due to this situation. However, as of now, the College has completed its tax payments and

successfully worked on improving the financial system, so it may be possible to improve the financial investments in the development of the study field and programme in the future. Further analysis can be seen in Chapter 1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field, specifically criterion 1.3.1.

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

The current resources and provision of the study programme is sufficient for its implementation. Despite limited financial resources, the College provides necessary resources through strong collaboration with industry partners. Student access to most resources required in the study process is provided through a digital environment (Moodle), that has been successfully integrated. The financial resources available to the study programme are minimal and have so far not contributed to major improvements. The College has altogether successfully worked on stabilising the financial situation, so it may be possible to improve the financial investments in the development of the study field and programme in the near future.

#### **Strengths:**

1. Strong cooperation with the National Library of Latvia, Riga Central Library, etc. libraries, sharing resources and implementing lessons for study program learning.
2. There is an established e-study environment for all study needs for students and staff.
3. Sufficient material, information, logistical and financial resources to ensure the implementation of the study programme for the current number of students.
4. Extra resources (rooms, hardware and software) for creative development during the study process is shared from other more arts-related study fields at the College.
5. In cooperation with the University of Latvia, there is a possibility to continue studies to obtain a bachelor's degree after graduating from College.
6. Stabilized financial situation, College having caught up with tax payments.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. Limited financial resources for the renewal of equipment and the purchase of information resources, for sustainable quality assurance of the study process, and for marketing activities to attract students.
2. Relatively high study fees.
3. No state funding for part-time students or support for the library worker field.
4. The Library Collection priorities for 2019-2022 need to be updated.

### **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

Financial resources of the study programme (and study field) are minimal. The College makes good use of strong collaboration with the industry to provide all necessary resources for the realisation of the study process.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. Based on the information provided in the SAR the qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements and it enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

It is not clear how many of the academic staff are elected. The only notice in the SAR is related to the study year 2019/2020: "In the study year 2019/2020, the academic staff consisted of 10 elected and appointed lecturers (i.e. 50% of 20 teaching staff) and 10 guest lecturers."

All staff members are with a master's degree and relevant work experience [SAR, p. 98]. An Assistant Professor with a master's degree in arts and 20 years of experience [SAR, p. 98] demonstrates that this staff member appears to have significant experience, which could be beneficial in the implementation of the study programme. Having lecturers with master's degrees and relevant work experience is a positive aspect of the teaching staff. 50% of academic staff have a master's degree or professional education in social sciences related to the library industry [SAR, p. 98]. Having half of the academic staff with relevant education in social sciences related to the library industry is a positive indicator. This can ensure that the teaching is based on a strong foundation of knowledge in the specific field. 80% of the academic staff teach industry (part B) and specialisation (part C) study courses [SAR, p. 98]. Having expertise in the industry and specialisation courses they teach allows academic staff to provide practical and relevant knowledge to the students. The study programme has guest lecturers for general education courses [SAR, p. 98].

The selection of academic staff appears to be based on compliance with regulatory requirements, relevant education, and professional experience [SAR, p. 98]. This adherence to the requirements is crucial for maintaining the quality of education.

Compared to the study year 2019/2020 (the year of submission of the previous SAR of the study direction), the number of assistant professors and lecturers involved in the implementation of the study programme has decreased from 20 lecturers to 18 (not including the lecturers of three industry elective study courses). This is related to changes in the plan of the study programme, offering industry elective study courses in cooperation with the study programme "Organization of Culture and Art Processes" - such as "Creating Communication Campaigns" and "Content Creation in Digital Media I" [SAR, p. 99]. The reduction in the number of academic staff can have implications for the implementation of the study programme. It is essential to ensure that the remaining staff can adequately cover the necessary courses and provide sufficient support to the students. The replacement of the professional foreign language lecturer due to burnout [SAR, p. 99] highlights the importance of ensuring the well-being of academic staff. It also demonstrates the need for contingency plans to maintain the quality of teaching in such situations.

The statements in the SAR were confirmed by observations and interviews conducted with management and academic staff. Based on the provided information, the teaching staff members have a mix of qualifications and experience relevant to the study programme.

2.4.2. Compared to the study year 2019/2020, the number of assistant professors and lecturers involved in the implementation of the study program has decreased from 20 lecturers to 18. This is related to changes in the plan of the study programme, offering industry elective study courses in cooperation with the study program "Organization of Culture and Art Processes" - such as "Creating Communication Campaigns" and "Content Creation in Digital Media I". Professional foreign language lecturers stopped working due to the professional burnout characteristic of the education sector [SAR, p. 100].

Based on the information provided in the SAR, it appears that the College purposefully takes measures to ensure 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. The evaluation is based on the following information:

Increase in academic staff teaching industry study courses. The report mentions an increase in the proportion of academic staff involved in the implementation of industry study courses [SAR, p. 100]. This could be a positive measure as academic staff typically have more in-depth knowledge and expertise in the subject matter, which can enhance the quality of teaching and ensure a stronger connection of the course content with the library industry.

Transition from guest lecturers to academic staff. The decrease in the number of guest lecturers is due to the academic staff taking over some study courses previously taught by guest lecturers [SAR, p. 100]. This shift can be beneficial as academic staff often have a more stable presence within the institution, which can lead to better continuity and consistency in the teaching approach and course content.

Specified achievable study results. The report mentions that changes in the teaching staff composition allow for specifying achievable study results [SAR, p. 100]. This suggests that the College is actively working to align the study outcomes with the intended learning objectives of the study programme, which is a crucial aspect of maintaining quality education.

Strengthening research capacity. The increase in the number of lecturers studying in doctoral and master's study programmes [SAR, p. 100] can contribute to strengthening the research capacity of the study programme. Faculty members engaged in research can bring their expertise and latest findings into the teaching process, enriching the learning experience for students.

The statements in the SAR were confirmed by observations and interviews conducted with management and academic staff.

In conclusion, based on the information provided in the SAR, it seems that the College is taking deliberate steps to ensure that changes in the teaching staff composition positively impact the quality of the study programme. The involvement of academic staff in industry study courses and the emphasis on research capacity can enhance the educational experience for students and align the study programme with the requirements set forth in regulatory enactments.

#### 2.4.3. N/A.

2.4.4. Based on the data provided in the SAR, within this study programme, there are 10 permanent academic staff members. Among them, six members have demonstrated their commitment to academic excellence through scientific publications during the explored period. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that the overall research production is currently at a modest level.

Taking a closer look at the publication records, experts find that six academic staff members have been responsible for 1-3 publications each in the observed period: two staff members have each contributed three publications, one staff member has two publications, and three staff members have one publication each. The collective efforts of these educators have led to the creation of 11 publications, with three of them in Latvian and eight in English. It is worth noting that, except for three publications in English, all other English publications were issued in Latvian publications.

It is also important to address the absence of their profiles in Google Scholar, not talking about Web of Science or Scopus. Establishing and maintaining such profiles can significantly enhance their visibility in the global academic community and facilitate collaboration opportunities.

In conclusion, while the study programme benefits from a dedicated team of 10 permanent academic staff members, who have produced some research work, there is room for growth in research output and visibility. By encouraging and supporting staff members in establishing a presence on esteemed academic databases, the study programme can promote greater recognition and participation in the wider academic discourse.

2.4.5. Based on the data provided in the SAR, it can be evaluated that a mechanism for mutual cooperation of the teaching staff in the implementation of the study programme has been established, and it seems to ensure the achievement of the aims of the study programme and the

interconnection of study courses within the study programme.

Indicators supporting this evaluation are the following:

1. Annual informative meetings and planning. The directions of cooperation are determined at annual informative meetings where priorities for the study year are planned [SAR, p. 101]. This shows that there is a structured approach to fostering cooperation among the teaching staff to align their efforts towards the common goals of the study programme.
2. Small changes in lecturer composition and high intensity of mutual contacts [SAR, p. 101]. The relatively small changes in the composition of lecturers and the high intensity of mutual contacts indicate that the teaching staff know each other personally, which facilitates flexible problem-solving and collaboration not only in formal meetings but also in joint interdisciplinary projects.
3. Methodical days for the development of research competencies. Methodical days are planned to promote cooperation in applied research, enhancing research competencies and information exchange about conducted research and applied projects [SAR, p. 101]. This indicates an effort to enhance the quality and relevance of the study programme through research-based teaching.
4. Co-creation activities and brand events. The College's initiative of co-creation activities, such as the Experimental Creativity Festival "Cultural Manifesto", involves students and lecturers from various study programmes, encouraging cross-disciplinary collaboration [SAR, p. 101]. This fosters a better understanding of the connection between theoretical study courses and practical activities in the cultural sector.
5. Specialisation Weeks. Specialisation Weeks involve all lecturers of the study programme, cooperating with other College study programmes [SAR, p. 101-102]. This inclusive planning allows for master classes by industry experts and demonstrations of industry achievements, providing an interdisciplinary context to supplement students' knowledge.
6. Student-to-lecturer ratio. The mathematical ratio of 3 students to one lecturer of the academic staff allows for a manageable workload, which can contribute to the high-quality management of studies and Qualification Papers [SAR, p. 102].

The statements in the SAR were confirmed by observations and interviews conducted with management, academic staff and students.

The SAR indicates a well-structured approach to promoting cooperation among the teaching staff, facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration, and ensuring a strong connection between theoretical study courses and practical activities. These measures seem to contribute positively to the achievement of the aims of the study programme and the interconnection of study courses within the study programme. However, continuous monitoring and assessment are essential to ensure the sustained effectiveness of the cooperation mechanisms and their impact on the study programme's quality.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements and enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and relevant study courses. The academic staff consists of 10 members, including an Assistant Professor with substantial experience and 9 lecturers with relevant work experience and master's degrees. Additionally, 50% of the academic staff hold master's degrees or professional education in social sciences related to the library industry. The study programme has taken measures to ensure cooperation among the teaching staff, which is evident in the annual informative meetings, planning of priorities, and strong mutual contacts. The involvement of academic staff in industry study courses and emphasis on research capacity contributes to enhancing the educational experience for students. In addition, the College has transitioned from guest lecturers to academic staff, specified achievable study results, and established mechanisms for co-creation activities and specialisation weeks, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. The

student-to-lecturer ratio is reasonable, allowing for effective management of studies and Qualification Papers. The College has purposefully taken measures to ensure that changes in the teaching staff composition positively impact the quality of the study programme. The cooperation mechanisms facilitate the achievement of study programme aims and the interconnection of study courses. Continuous monitoring and assessment are emphasised for sustained effectiveness.

#### Strengths:

1. The teaching staff involved in the study programme complies with the requirements, ensuring that students receive instruction from qualified individuals with relevant expertise.
2. The academic staff's expertise in industry and specialisation courses allows them to provide practical and relevant knowledge to the students, enhancing the educational experience.
3. Having 50% of the academic staff with education in social sciences related to the library industry ensures a strong foundation of knowledge in the specific field, contributing to the quality of teaching.
4. The College has established mechanisms for mutual cooperation among teaching staff, including annual informative meetings, co-creation activities, and specialisation weeks, fostering collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches.
5. The increase in the number of lecturers involved in doctoral and master's study programmes strengthens the research capacity of the study programme, bringing the latest findings and expertise into the teaching process.

#### Weaknesses:

1. The reduction in the number of assistant professors and lecturers compared to the previous reporting period may have implications for the implementation of the study programme. Adequate coverage of necessary courses and student support should be ensured.
2. The replacement of a professional foreign language lecturer due to burnout highlights the importance of ensuring the well-being of academic staff. Contingency plans should be in place to maintain the quality of teaching in such situations.
3. The study programme has guest lecturers for general education courses, which may introduce variability in teaching quality and continuity. Ensuring consistency and qualifications of guest lecturers is crucial.
4. While cooperation mechanisms are in place, continuous monitoring and assessment is essential to sustain their effectiveness and impact on the study programme's quality.

### Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme demonstrates strengths in having qualified staff, relevant expertise, and mechanisms for cooperation. However, it should address weaknesses related to staff changes, reliance on guest lecturers, and maintaining lecturer well-being to ensure continued high-quality education.

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The College provides a certification of compliance with the State Professional Higher Education Standard as described in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations Nr. 141 (20.04.2001.) "Regulations for First-level Professional Higher Education State Standard" (Annex 22), however, it should be noted, that these Regulations are not valid and have been replaced by the Nr. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education" (13.06.2023.)

Experts' analysis concludes that the study programme complies with the newer regulations as well.

- 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

The College provides a comparison with requirements and evidence of compliance with the professional standard "Library Information Specialist" (2009) in Annex 23. Experts evaluate this as adequate and the study programme as compliant.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The descriptions of the study courses [Annex 25] have been prepared accordingly, complying with the relevant requirements. Experts commend the well-implemented unified course description form.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma [Annex 20] to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with 16.04.2013. Regulation No 202 of Minister Cabinet Regulations "Procedures for Issuing State-Recognized Higher Education Documents".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The provided biographies [Annex 11] of the staff certify that the qualifications of the teaching staff meet the requirements for the implementation of the study programme.

- 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

N/A.

- 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

N/A.

- 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

The Confirmation "On the proficiency of knowledge of the national language" (29.03.2023., Annex 12) certifies that the staff meet the language requirements for the implementation of the study programme and professional and office duties. This is additionally supplemented by the provided biographies [Annex 11].

- 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

N/A.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement [Annex 8] corresponds to the Cabinet of Ministers' Regulations No. 70 "Terms that must be included in the study contract" (23.01.2007).

- 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 College will provide the opportunity to continue their studies at the University of Latvia study programme "Information Management" according to a mutual cooperation agreement [Annex 6]. The College also provides the student with such information in their study agreement [Annex 8].

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The College will provide compensation for their losses as is confirmed by the Loss Compensation Arrangements approved at the College on Dec 9, 2019 [Annex 7]. The study agreements also include a general clause on compensation for losses [Annex 8].

- 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

N/A.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

N/A.

### **Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The points set forth in regard to compliance with the regulatory enactments are fully compliant.

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

The study programme "Library Science and Information" is compliant with the study field. The title, code, degree to be obtained, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. The duration and scope of the study programme are justified, however, the long-term competitiveness and the number of students could benefit, if the College would consider opening the study programme's equivalent in the English language. The study programme is economically and socially justified, especially, when it comes to the graduates' contribution to the sector of public libraries in Latvia.

The content of the study programme is topical and corresponds to the aim, goal and planned objectives of the study programme "Library Science and Information". The methods applied include approaches that ensure a student-centred approach, and this is further possible because of the small number of students. The study programme has a strong practical component and its four internships bring valuable competencies to the students. The knowledge and skills acquired during the study programme such as classification, indexing, bibliographic description and basics of law are highly rated by the students, graduates and employers. New study courses have also been implemented in response to employer and graduate commentary about cultural heritage, contemporary literature and digital resources. Discussions point out the need for more pedagogical skills among librarians.

The current resources and provision of the study programme are sufficient for its implementation. Despite limited financial resources, the College provides necessary resources through strong collaboration with industry partners. Student access to most resources required in the study process is provided through a digital environment (Moodle), that has been successfully integrated. The financial resources available to the study programme are minimal and have so far not contributed to major improvements. The College has altogether successfully worked on stabilising the financial situation, so it may be possible to improve the financial investments in the development of the study field and programme in the near future.

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements and enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and relevant study courses. The academic staff consists of 10 members, including an Assistant Professor with substantial experience and 9 lecturers with relevant work experience and master's degrees. Additionally, 50% of the academic staff hold master's degrees or professional education in social sciences related to the library industry. The study programme has taken measures to ensure cooperation among the teaching staff, which is evident in the annual informative meetings, planning of priorities, and strong mutual contacts. The involvement of academic staff in industry study courses and emphasis on research capacity contributes to enhancing the educational experience for students. In addition, the College has transitioned from guest lecturers to academic staff, specified achievable study results, and established mechanisms for co-creation activities and specialisation weeks, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. The student-to-lecturer ratio is reasonable, allowing for effective management of studies and Qualification Papers. The College has purposefully taken measures to ensure that changes in the teaching staff composition positively impact the quality of the study programme. The cooperation mechanisms facilitate the achievement of study programme aims and the interconnection of study courses. Continuous monitoring and assessment are emphasised for sustained effectiveness.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Library Science and Information"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Library Science and Information"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

Update the Library Collection priorities (currently only 2019–2022 available).

Implement well-being initiatives for academic staff to prevent burnout and ensure their overall health and job satisfaction. This can include stress management workshops, counselling services, and workload adjustments when necessary.

Provide training and support for academic staff to enhance their teaching skills and promote professional growth. Workshops on effective teaching methodologies and student engagement can improve teaching quality and continuity.

### **Long-term recommendations**

Develop the study programme and/or separate modules in English and work toward attracting international students.

Consider supplementing the programme with topics or specialization study courses that touch on the subjects of pedagogy and the needs of different user groups.

During introductory meetings about internships emphasize the significance of various experiences and the opportunities to take their internships in libraries or institutions that are different from their workplaces, if possible.

Create a dedicated centre for faculty development and pedagogical research. This centre can offer workshops, resources, and ongoing support to continuously enhance teaching quality.

Make an effort to create clear descriptions of the study field and programme details in future SARs, especially regarding statistical data, number of things.

Establish a formal mentoring system to support new faculty members and assist them in navigating the academic environment. Experienced faculty can provide guidance on effective teaching strategies and research activities.

Avoid over-reliance on a single foreign language lecturer by recruiting a diverse team of language instructors. This can prevent disruptions due to staff burnout and ensure a variety of teaching styles and expertise.

Regularly assess faculty workload to identify potential imbalances and provide necessary support. This can involve workload redistribution, additional teaching assistance, or hiring more faculty, if feasible.

Develop a strategic plan for faculty recruitment and retention to ensure the study programme's long-term stability and quality. This plan should address succession planning, career progression, and competitive compensation packages.

A system for the continuous monitoring and assessment of external cooperations should be implemented.

### **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
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:	Fully compliant	<p>SAR, p. 25-32 along with its Annex 3 and Quality Management Policy and Quality Management System Manual</p> <p>[<a href="https://kulturaskoledza.lv/en/about-college/documents/">https://kulturaskoledza.lv/en/about-college/documents/</a>] describes the internal quality assurance system in detail.</p> <p>The Experts group notes that, in assessing a requirement, the experts take into account the fact that one of the sub-requirements is partially compliant, but the experts do not consider that this affects the assessment of the requirement as a whole. The College has demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement and development, it is simply that within the limitations of their financial situation so far, it has been challenging to implement specific tools that tools that can be seen in other institutions (like various financial motivations and aids) .The group of experts acknowledged that the financial situation is a major challenge for the college, affecting all its activities.</p>
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)	Fully compliant	<p>The College's study field of Information and Communication Sciences aligns well with its development goals and industry needs. Emphasising applied research, artistic creativity, and technology-enriched study processes prepares future-ready specialists. Collaboration with industry experts and international cooperation enhance relevance and research capabilities. Challenges in research funding are being addressed, and the College's commitment to quality assurance ensures continuous improvement. The College's approach fosters scientific research, applied research, and artistic creation, contributing to sustainable development in the field and cultural sector in Latvia.</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.	Partially compliant	<p>The College demonstrates strong cooperation and internationalisation efforts with various institutions both within Latvia and abroad. The involvement of industry professionals and diverse partners enriches the study field and prepares students for future careers. However, there are challenges to address, particularly in increasing incoming mobility and overcoming the impact of the pandemic on mobility opportunities. By focusing on these areas, the College can further enhance the quality of its international cooperation and mobility programmes.</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.	Fully compliant			All recommendations have been addressed, most are implemented or partially implemented with a final date later in the future. Some points need further improvements, but preliminary work has been done.

#### 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	Library Science and Information (41322)	Not relevant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

#### The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

No dissenting opinions