

APPLICATION

Studiju virziena "Information and Communication Sciences" for assessment

Study field	<i>Information and Communication Sciences</i>
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Self-evaluation report

Study field "Information and Communication Sciences"

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

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I - Information on the Higher Education Institution/College

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

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (ViA) was established in 1996, and acquired a status of the State higher education institution in 2001. In 2002, ViA was accredited for an indefinite period of time. ViA offers high-quality study programmes and provides the balance between theory and practice. Study programmes are constantly updated and adapted to the current needs of society and changes in the labour market. The quality of studies is assured by experienced and professional teaching staff, advanced forms of study, and integrated research and academic work.

ViA offers college programmes, undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programmes, in total – 22 programmes. ViA study programmes are implemented in six study directions which are divided into two faculties – the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Engineering.

Two professional bachelor's study programs and two academic master's study programs are implemented in the study direction "Information and Communication Sciences":

- **Communication and public relations** (CPR) (professional bachelor study program);
- **Media studies and journalism** (MSJ) (professional bachelor study program);
- **Media and information literacy** (MIL) (academic master's study program);
- **Strategic communication and governance** (SCG) (academic master's study program).

A detailed list of ViA study directions and study programs can be found in the appendix to the report (see *Annex 1*).

Research work at ViA is carried out at two scientific institutes – the Institute of Social, Economic and Humanities Research (HESPI), established in 2015, and the Institute of Socio-Technical Systems Engineering (SSII), which was established in July 2006.

The vision of ViA is as follows: “ViA is an internationally recognized regional platform for higher education, science, knowledge transfer and idea leadership, offering versatile opportunities of the digital age ecosystem for acquiring professional higher education and interdisciplinary research, responding proactively to societal challenges.” The mission of ViA is to promote sustainable development of the knowledge society at the regional and national level, providing private and public sectors with high-level professionals, as well as conducting research to solve problems of public interest.

ViA has set three strategic priorities in its development strategy for 2016-2020: 1. Education, 2. Science, and 3. Knowledge transfer and idea leadership. The goal set in the field of education is not only to develop study programmes and directions, but also to offer a wide range of lifelong learning opportunities, as well as additional education for pupils. The goal set in the field of science is to conduct research that is a proactive response to societal challenges in accordance with the study directions and external demand. The goal set in the priority of knowledge transfer and idea leadership is a transfer of knowledge of ViA and its partner institutions to cooperation partners, fulfilling the role

The average number of students per year in the field of study during the last ten years is 80 students, the average number of students enrolled per year is 47 students, the average number of

graduates per year is 30. A detailed number of students can be reviewed in the appendix to the report (*see Annex 2*).

Refer to the annex for ViA study programmes (*see Annex 1*).

Refer to the annex for student number dynamics during the assessment period (*see Annex 2*).

ViA strategy is available on the ViA website *both in Latvian and English*.

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

ViA is a derived public person. ViA was founded by the State, and its legal activities are regulated by the ViA Constitution. ViA is managed in accordance with the democratic management style and the principle of collegiality. Faculty deans and heads of other academic and administrative structures, as well as representatives of the student board are involved in the decision-making process and the planning and implementation of ViA operational and strategic management. Operational management issues are addressed at weekly management meetings. ViA operational management is organized by the administrative vice-rector. The meetings are open, and information about the meetings is sent electronically to ViA staff. In order to assess the current processes and to successfully organize the study work, *operational seminars of the directors of the study directions and study programmes*, as well as *meetings to deal with development, academic and scientific issues* are held once a month.

Refer to the annex for ViA structure (*see Annex 3*).

ViA decision-making institutions:

- **Constitutional Assembly** – the highest collegial representative and governing institution and a decision-making body of ViA, elected for 2 years. The Constitutional Assembly consists of 40 persons, of which 24 are elected from academic staff members elected to academic positions, 8 representatives are elected from general staff members, and 8 representatives are elected from full-time students.
- **Academic Arbitration Court** – ViA institution established to examine disputes between ViA officials, management institutions of structural units under subordinate relations, as well as to examine student and academic staff applications regarding restrictions and violations of academic freedom and rights established in ViA Constitution. The Academic Arbitration Court consists of 3 members, two of which are elected by secret ballot from the academic staff elected to academic positions, and one is elected by the student self-government from the full-time students.
- **Senate** – collegial management and decision-making institution, which approves the order and regulations that regulate all the areas of ViA activity. The Senate consists of 20 members: 15 representatives of the academic staff, 4 representatives of the students and 1 representative of the general staff. The term of office of the Senate is two years. The Senate meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Any student and ViA employee can participate there. Within the Senate, there are two standing commissions: the Study and Science Commission and the Finance, Budget and Strategy Commission.

- **Academic Ethics Commission** – collegial institution that promotes understanding and consults ViA students and lecturers on the issues of academic and research ethics and examines violations of academic and research ethics committed by ViA students and academic staff.
- **Audit Commission** controls the compliance of ViA financial and economic activities with the decisions of ViA Constitution and institutions, as well as with the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia. According to ViA Constitution, the Audit Commission consisting of three people is elected for two years.
- **Faculty Councils** are collegiate decision-making institutions for academic, scientific and research activities of the faculties.

Refer to the annex for the list of the main ViA internal normative documents and regulations (see Annex 4).

1.3. Description of the mechanism for the implementation of the quality policy and the procedures for the assurance of the quality of higher education, as well as the stakeholders involved in the development and improvement of the quality assurance system and their role in these processes.

The internal quality system of the study programmes implemented at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences and the study programme “Information and Communication Sciences” is based on the European and national legislation defining the basic principles of higher education development. The following is an overview of the different aspects of the quality assurance system

Quality assurance policy and measures

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences has developed and approved the Development Strategy for 2016-2020, which envisages striving for excellence and competitiveness in education, striving for excellence and competitiveness in science and research, as well as striving for knowledge transfer and investment in regional development. The strategy results in a number of measures to ensure the quality and standards of the study programmes and degrees to be awarded. Strategic control over ViA development is exercised by ViA Senate, while administrative and accounting control is exercised by the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Faculty of Social Sciences regularly (once a month) evaluates its activities and makes decisions on current issues at the meetings of the Faculty Council. The qualifications and competencies of the academic staff are assessed on the basis of their professional, academic and scientific achievements. Every year, the development of the ICS direction is assessed during the preparation and discussion of the self-assessment report both within the framework of the study direction at the faculty level and in ViA Senate. Since 2018, ICS Advisory Board has been involved in quality management.

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences has approved a number of documents that define the relationships between teaching and research, the strategy of institution’s quality and requirements, and the organization of the quality assurance system. There is a framework of responsibilities for quality assurance developed for the faculties, study directions and other structural units and individuals, as well as for student participation in quality assurance, and the ways through which the quality policy is implemented, monitored and adjusted. All normative documents are available to students and academic staff on ViA e-environment. Students are informed on their rights and opportunities to participate in the development and implementation of ViA development policy both in the introductory studies and later during the study process. Every semester, the director of the

study direction meets with the students of ICS; ViA student self-government also delegates candidates for the election of ViA Senate and the Constitutional Assembly, and organizes meetings with ViA Rector and/or directors of the study directions, as necessary.

ViA provides the approval, monitoring and control of study programs and degrees to be awarded (*see Annex 5*), ensuring that the study programs offered are of high quality, regularly reviewed and periodically revised to ensure their continued relevance and topicality

Internal quality assurance policy and measures/procedures

- ViA has developed the Development Strategy for 2016-2020 aiming to ensure high quality of the higher education study programmes and their continuous improvement to achieve excellence.
- ViA Convention of Counsellors is established with a purpose to promote creative discussions and to generate ideas that would help determine competitive future and strategic path of ViA.
- ViA Scientific Council is established with a purpose to promote coherent and focused academic and scientific research activities in accordance with ViA strategy. The Council consults and, if necessary, prepares proposals for Senate and the Rector on strategically important issues of the academic and scientific research activities of the higher education institution, including launching of new study and research directions of ViA, preparation of new study programmes, etc.
- At the level of the study directions, there are advisory councils of the study directions composed of professionals of the field, graduates of the study programmes, students, and the teaching staff of the study directions. The director of the ICS study direction was one of the promoters of the establishment of the Council/Sub-Council of Communication Experts within the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, which will serve as one more additional tool for information exchange and strengthening cooperation links with the industry.
- ViA has the quality and standard assurance policy for the study programmes and degrees or qualifications to be awarded, as well as other documents/regulations related to ensuring the high-quality study process.
- In accordance with the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia, self-assessment reports of the study directions are prepared and approved by ViA Senate every year. All reports are publicly available on the ViA website, and everyone can read them.
- ViA promotes continuous education and training of its staff on a regular basis by supporting participation of the employees in various local and international courses, seminars, conferences, exchange programs. Professional development plans of the employees are discussed during the annual development discussions organized by ViA Rector.

Quality assurance and assessment of the academic staff activity

ViA has a number of measures to make sure and monitor that the teaching staff has the necessary qualifications and competences to work with students, i.e.:

- Requirements are laid down in ViA Regulations regarding Elections to Academic Positions;
- ViA Regulations of Remuneration contain the division of academic work, conditions for research work;
- Student surveys on each lecturer's study course in the respective semester. Both a particular lecturer and the director of the study direction get acquainted with the results of the surveys, and the director of the study direction discusses with the lecturer positive things and those aspects that need to be improved. There have been situations when, after analyzing and discussing the results of the surveys, a decision is made not to continue cooperation with the particular guest lecturers. Summaries of the survey results are discussed in the councils of

the study directions.

- ViA Senate has approved a job description of the teaching staff; it stipulates requirements for academic work, research, academic and scientific qualification improvement, as well as administrative work. Compliance with the requirements is controlled upon deciding on the re-election or promotion of lecturers to higher academic positions.
- In accordance with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia regarding Education and Professional Qualification Required for Teachers and Procedures for Improvement of Professional Competence of Teachers, professional development may include international mobility in accordance with the goals of professional development, participation in projects and conferences and seminars as evidenced by the documents issued. In order to ensure the qualification, improvement of work quality and professional development of ViA academic staff:
 - a lecturer has a possibility to extend and increase his/her knowledge and professionalism by gaining experience abroad or by having in-service training at the foreign institutions of higher education/organizations, as well as by participating in relevant seminars and conferences within the framework of Erasmus+, Nordplus, and other mobility programmes,
 - a lecturer has a possibility to attend a lecture taught by another ViA lecturer and provide feedback/suggestions on the content and structure of the particular lecture.
- To ensure the assessment of the work quality of ViA academic staff, ViA organizes once a year a seminar for the teaching staff on the study quality assurance issues and a discussion on the lecturers' observations and experience gained while visiting lectures.
- In necessary, the director of the study direction organizes an additional meeting to deal with improvement issues and/or to investigate problems in depth (including document review).
- Teaching staff is required to submit a report once per academic year (in October for the previous academic year) on scientific achievements, experience gained in projects, seminars and conferences. Information is collected on the portal sciencelatvia.lv and used for the preparation of scientific reports and self-assessment reports of study directions.
- ICS teaching staff is composed by attracting both elected lecturers and professionals of the field who teach both individual guest lectures and entire study courses. This is one of the ways to achieve the balance between acquiring theoretical and practical knowledge in the study content. Thus, it is ensured that the staff involved in the implementation of the ICS programmes knows and understands the subject to be taught and have the necessary skills and experience to effectively transfer their knowledge and understanding to students. The decision on the approval of the elected teaching staff (positions of lecturers, assistant professors) and guest lecturers is made by the Faculty Council after getting acquainted with the qualification and competence of each applicant. ViA elected lecturers take part in Erasmus+ and other professional development mobility to improve their qualification.

Resources of academic work and research

- ViA material and technical base and infrastructure ensure that resources available to students are appropriate and suitable for each study programme.
- ViA library provides information resources necessary for academic and scientific activities, access to scientific articles and other electronic information bases from the ViA library portal.
- ViA e-learning environment is an interactive student support environment providing study materials, electronic document exchange and communication with a lecturer, as well as a possibility to submit test papers.
- ViA uses two buildings for the study process, science, research and administrative activities, with a total area of 7312 m². Of these, 2387 m² are used directly in the study and research process. The current study base is 38 classrooms (total area 1445 m²), incl. 3 computer

classrooms with 90 workstations and Internet connection (195 m²) and 12 laboratories: Data Security Laboratory (Cyber Security Laboratory); Computer network laboratory; Virtual Reality laboratory; Material Values for the Multimedia Laboratory for Study Management and Technology Research; Material Values for the Multimedia Laboratory for Research in Communication Ecosystems and Technologies; Laboratory of Simulation Modeling and RFID Technologies; Mobile Technology Laboratory; Energy Efficiency Laboratory; Mechatronics Laboratory; Electrical Engineering Laboratory; Construction Laboratory; Spatial Research Laboratory (total area 324 m²). All computers are connected in a common network that provides unified information flow, as well as access to the Internet and databases. Subscribed full-text databases are accessible from any location where you have access to the Internet. The study process also uses a conference room (257 m²), while the study blocks also have room for group work and rooms where students can carry out independent study work (350 m²).

- Booking and reservation system of premises, lecture-rooms and hostels provides for a possibility to follow the lecture schedule.
- Development of career education by involving graduates of ViA. From autumn 2019, career and development consultations are provided to ViA students.

Information systems

ViA gathers information required for effective administration of study programmes and other activities through ViA's website, social media, and:

- Information System of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (www.lais.lv) providing a possibility to collect data on all aspects of studies and to use them successfully in the study process;
- Record Keeping System (<https://lietvediba.va.lv>);
- E-learning environment (<https://moodle.va.lv/>);
- ViA alumni database;
- Library system ALISE;
- Accounting system Horizon;
- Study and student loan accounting system.

During the academic year of 2018-2019, ViA systems were optimized, taking into account recommendations received during the licensing or accreditation of other study programmes. ViA ceased to use Dokeos system (academic work, e-environment of the study courses) and maintain the intranet (documentation, forms, information on Erasmus+ exchange opportunities, etc.), switching to Moodle system which functions both as an e-environment of the study courses and a document storage. This makes it easier for the students and ViA staff to use the systems.

Public information

- ViA regularly publishes up-to-date, neutral and impartial information regarding programmes and degrees/qualifications on the ViA website and social media accounts, as well as by means of printed leaflets and other materials. ViA representatives participate in educational exhibitions both in Latvia and abroad.
- ViA teaching staff and employees are also actively involved in public opinion formation in the region, they promote industry interests in Latvia by participating in conferences, seminars, public lectures, working in NGOs, publishing scientific publications. Gatis Krūmiņš, Agnese Dāvidsone, Jānis Buholcs, Solvita Denisa Liepniece, Jānis Kapustāns and others involved in the ICS study direction are regularly interviewed by representatives of the media, participate

in public debates and various international and national public events, such as the World Congress of Latvian Scientists in 2018, annual conversation festival “Lampa” in Cēsis, meetings of the Association of Latvian Students and Researchers in the UK (ALSRUK), Riga TechGirls events etc. G. Krūmiņš is a freelance advisor to the current Minister of Education and Science Ilga Šuplinska and has received various awards for scientific activity and popularization of science. J. Buholcs is a member of the Ethics Council of the Association of Latvian Journalists. Three elected lecturers of the study direction – Agnese Dāvidsone, Vineta Silkāne and Anžela Jurāne Brēmane – are members of the Independent Education Society. S. Denisa Liepniece is a renowned disinformation researcher and media literacy trainer who frequently speaks in Eastern Partnership countries. S. Denisa Liepniece is also the author of the illustrated fairy tale for children “*Caps un ciet. Vilks manipulators*” (Gotcha. Wolf, the Manipulator) on media literacy and the nature of disinformation. J. Kapustāns regularly speaks as a foreign policy expert and commentator on Latvian Radio, Latvian Television and other media. A. Dāvidsone and L. Ločmele have been running media literacy school for secondary school students in Valmiera since 2016 in cooperation with various educational institutions – Valmiera State Gymnasium, Valmiera Technical School, etc. In spring 2019, 120 students of Valmiera Technical School studied in the media literacy school. A. Dāvidsone and other lecturers of the direction regularly run media literacy workshops for different audiences – teachers, students, librarians, NGO staff, journalists, municipal staff, etc., in cooperation with such organizations as CEPA, IREX. In this way, society receives diverse information on the competences and areas of expertise of the study direction lecturers, as well as on the study opportunities in the four study programmes of the ICS study direction.

Cooperation with students and graduates

Every year ViA conducts student opinion surveys on compliance of the study programmes implemented at the higher education institution with the students’ expectations, on the quality of study programmes, informative, material and technical provision, the quality of the academic staff, the quality of international cooperation, as well as on other issues. Results of surveys are analyzed and assessed, and decisions on various changes and improvements are made on the basis of these results. Responses are used for development planning and ViA performance improvement. At the level of the study direction, the director of ICS direction meets with the students of all programmes twice an academic year and discusses various current issues, listens to students’ opinions and recommendations. Each student group elects each year also a senior group member to coordinate collaboration and communication between the student group and the director of the ICS study direction. All of this is done to get in-depth feedback from students, to plan and make various changes regarding course planning by semesters, attracting lecturers to specific courses, acquiring new items for library collections, etc. aspects related to study organization and quality assurance.

ViA also conducts a graduate survey on an annual basis. The main purpose is to document satisfaction of the graduates with their education immediately after graduation, as well as to collect data on graduate employment. The survey is conducted a year after graduation. In general, there is a tendency for the undergraduate students of the ICS study direction to quickly and successfully enter the labour market, and their work is related to the qualification acquired. It would be preferably to do surveys on graduate employment also over a longer period of time to analyze graduates’ career dynamics and professional development in the chosen field over a longer period. This would require additional investments, therefore, data are collected within limits of the study direction level, and lecturers and study directors keep in touch with alumni on social media, at public events and by other means. One of the factors that could be considered as professional development of graduates (and, to a large extent, satisfaction with their education) is active involvement in the study process after graduation, which can take various forms – guest lectures,

offering research topics and internship possibilities, and other forms of engagement. It should be noted that graduates participate also in the work of the ICS Advisory Board, as well as they are active members of the Latvian Communication Association, Latvian Public Relations Association, Latvian Association of Journalists, etc. The Quality Assurance Policy document is publicly available on the website of ViA: https://va.lv/sites/default/files/ViA_Studiju-kvalitates-nodrosinasanas-politika-APST-31012020.pdf.

Refer to the annex for the description of ViA internal quality assurance in the study process (see Annex 5).

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

1.	The higher education institution/ college has established a policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education.	Complies
		see 1.3. (Part I)
2.	A mechanism for the creation and internal approval of the study programmes of the higher education institution/ college, as well as the supervision of their performance and periodic inspection thereof has been developed.	Complies
		see 1.3. (Part I)
3.	The criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of students' results, which enable reassurance of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, have been developed and made public.	Complies
		see 1.6. (Part II)
4.	Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality have been developed.	Complies
		see 1.3. (Part I)

5.	The higher education institution/ college ensures the collection and analysis of the information on the study achievements of the students, employment of the graduates, satisfaction of the students with the study programme, efficiency of the work of the academic staff, the study funds available, and the disbursements thereof, as well as the key performance indicators of the higher education institution/ college.	Complies see 1.3. (Part I)
6.	The higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their quality assurance systems.	Complies see 1.3. (Part I)

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

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

There are in total four study programmes in the study direction “Information and Communication Sciences”. During the last accreditation period, the study direction experienced a significant growth – apart from two undergraduate programmes previously implemented, two new postgraduate programmes aimed at international and local student groups have been developed to respond to today’s major societal challenges. In general, the central rationale for implementing all study programmes of the study direction is based on the fact that the quality of media environment, media professionalism, as well as strategically planned and implemented communication in private organizations and public administration are of enormous importance in strengthening security of the state, information space, ensuring sustainability of society and democratic processes. These ideas are also reflected in the curriculum, research related to the implementation of the study programmes, attraction of external funding and other aspects.

Two of the study direction programmes are undergraduate programmes. One of them is “Communication and Public Relations” (CPR) which has been implemented since the foundation of ViA in 1996 and is considered as one of the best communication programmes in the country, besides, it is one of the few professional public relations study programmes in Latvia. The second undergraduate programme is “Media Studies and Journalism” (MSJ) which is the only professional

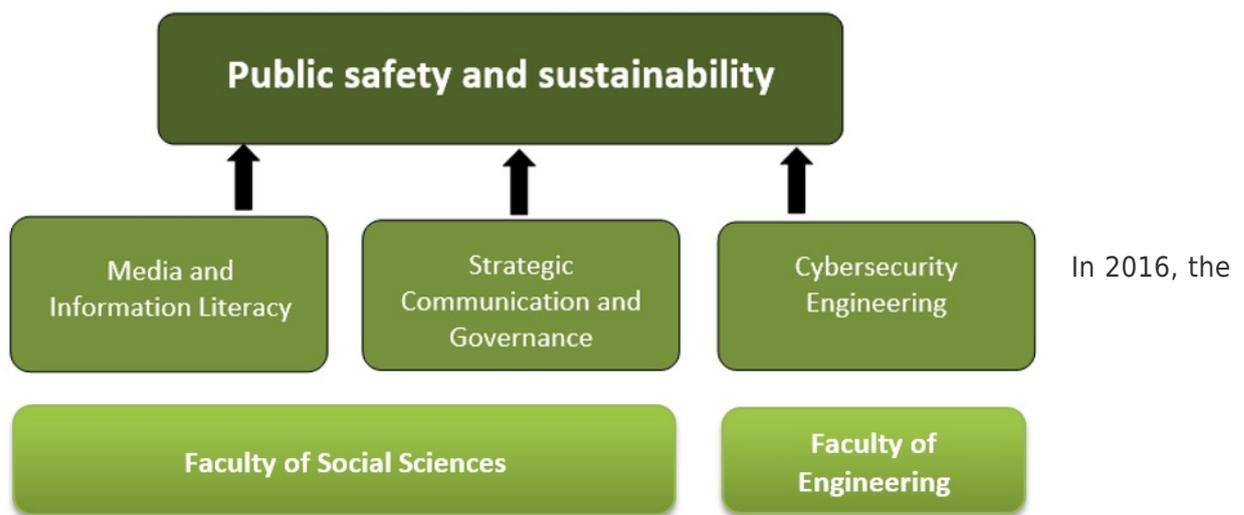
undergraduate programme of this kind implemented at the State higher education institution in Latvia. In accordance with the international accreditation assessment received in 2012, both programmes are characterized by the high quality of studies, a professional and academically strong and motivated team of lecturers, extensive involvement in research, and approbation of research results in the study process. In general, students and graduates of both study programmes easily and successfully enter the labour market, as they make good contacts in the field already within the framework of their internship.

Relatively recently, two Master's programmes are included in the study direction. Since 2018, the academic study programme "Media and Information Literacy" (MIL), the only study programme of this kind in the Baltic States, is implemented. From autumn 2020, ViA will start the implementation of the Master's programme "Strategic Communication and Governance" (SCG) within the ICS study direction, based on the license obtained in autumn 2019. This programme is a unique offer in Latvia and also internationally as it will give in-depth interdisciplinary knowledge of various current political, social and cultural challenges that shape today's communication environment, provide insight into the role of civic participation in public administration, and insight into building symmetric relationships with different target audiences. Unlike similar programmes abroad, ViA's programme will place a greater emphasis on strengthening national security, taking into account a specific situation in Latvia and specific challenges of communication professionals, taking into consideration Russia's strategic interest in the Baltic States. Unlike similar programmes, this programme places also greater emphasis on acquiring insight into psychological science by focusing on cognitive processes and decision making at the individual and group level. Both Master's programmes will be offered in both Latvian and English, which is not a common practice in the field of communication either in Latvia or in neighbouring countries. In the autumn of 2020, five students from Belarus started their studies in the SKP program with scholarships from ViA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - this is ViA's initiative to support the country's civil society that was supported by our state institutions.

Both new Master's programmes are developed in accordance with the study programme consolidation process started by ViA, which is financed by the ESF Operational Programme "Growth and Employment" within the framework of the specific support objective (SAM) 8.2.1 in order to reduce fragmentation of the study programmes and to strengthen sharing of resources. The project goal is to concentrate the study offer, as well as to increase possibilities to attract more international students by increasing the number of study programmes in English. The project is being implemented in accordance with the ViA study programme development and consolidation plan approved by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2018. For a more detailed description of each of the four study programmes, refer to the descriptions of the specific study programmes in the following sections of this report.

The programmes implemented within the ICS direction are based on the principle of additionality and continuity within both the study direction and the higher education establishment as an institution. At the undergraduate level, students are prepared for further studies at the postgraduate level. At the postgraduate level, synergies are created between the MIL and SCG study programme and the "Cybersecurity Engineering" (CE) study programme implemented within the study direction "Information Technologies" of the Faculty of Engineering - by teaching joint study courses and implementing common practical tasks in the form of strategic games and social simulations. Study programmes of the ICS study direction promote public safety and sustainability. In the future, it is also planned to strengthen cooperation between MIL, SCG and CE through applied and fundamental research projects carried out jointly by students and lecturers aimed at strengthening public security and sustainability from a social, communicative and technological point of view (see *Figure No.1*).

Figure No. 1. Synergy among ViA study programmes of different faculties.



ICS direction launched a so called media literacy initiative within the framework of which the existing study content at the undergraduate level was improved, while the MIL programme and a lifelong learning offer for teachers, high school students and other audiences were developed. Various media content deconstruction projects are being implemented, as well as media criticism is being published. Information on all media literacy activities within the ICS study direction can be found on the website <https://va.lv/en/science/media-literacy-initiative>. Within the framework of the initiative, a strategic partnership in the ICS direction is established, and work is started on joint projects with the world-class universities such as King’s College London, University of Tartu in Estonia and other higher education institutions, including outside the EU, for example, Mohyla Academy School of Journalism in Ukraine, Tbilisi National University in Georgia, the Georgia Institute of Public Administration (GIPA). Such a wide range of cooperation partners at this level provides extensive cooperation possibilities in research and academic work. There is a close cooperation with the NATO Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence, as well as with a number of other partners in Latvia and Europe – EastStratCom in Brussels, Baltic Media Centre of Excellence in Riga, etc.

Substantiation of the development of the study direction and the study programmes implemented in it from the point of view of Latvia’s interests is based on the following documents:

- National Development Plan for 2014-2020, where one of the directions of action is advanced research, innovation, higher education. Section 317 of the Plan refers to the need for communication and media professionals, as “the State needs to strengthen the high quality information and democratic discussion space, which provides both society-wide mutual communication for promoting participation and a possibility for the State to listen to and communicate with its citizens and nationals abroad... promoting conjunctive sense of values and goals.”
- Media Policy Guidelines for 2016-2020, which identify the need for high-quality possibilities to train young journalists, as well as for lifelong learning opportunities for those already working in the industry.
- Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030, which addresses media and communication aspect, emphasizing the need to expand digital cultural space of Latvia (Section 62) and to ensure media availability (Sections 306 - 307).
- Informative report prepared by the Ministry of Economics on medium and long-term labour

market forecasts. The report emphasizes that the demand for a group of professions “senior specialists of legal, social and cultural affairs”, including both journalists and communication specialists, will remain in the labour market;

- Guidelines for Science, Technology Development and Innovation for 2014-2020 and Latvian Smart Specialization Strategy (RIS 3). Specialization Area 5 of the Latvian Smart Specialization Strategy: information and communication technologies (including modernization of education through digital tools) and Priority 5: development of a modern education system in accordance with the future workforce demand and needs. It is already being discussed in the public domain that Latvia may soon face a significant shortage of specialists who are able to work with the 21st century technologies and methods, including those who have well-developed creative, problem solving, leadership and other competencies that are often described as the 21st century transversal competences. Approaches that ensure the development of these competencies through innovative, student-centred, interactive study methods that promote authentic experience for students are being developed in the study direction. Implementation of the study programmes within the ICS study direction supports the following RIS 3 principles: 1) development of modern competences, including problem solving, data processing and utilization, identification and use of opportunities (courses of the study programme, internship, qualification paper); 2) development of specialization areas related to social problem solving, raising of the analytical and absorption capacity of society (internship, elaboration and defence of the qualification paper); 3) development and strengthening of an active creative activity (internship, individual and group work included in the study courses, internship, elaboration and defence of the qualification paper);
- Research on Vidzeme Planning Region Smart Specialization Opportunities (2014), where Vidzeme Planning Region has identified the development of new business areas in the knowledge economy fields as one of the strategic objectives of smart specialization in the region. The region has potential for the development of creative industries, including entrepreneurship related to the audiovisual sector, communication, new media solutions.

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

The goal for the implementation of ViA study programmes of the study direction “Information and Communication Science” (ICS) complies with the strategic goals defined in ViA Development Strategy for 2016-2020, and especially with the goal under the priority “Education”: to ensure modern and qualitative education offer based on research results that complies with the labour market demand and forecasts, as well as with good international practice. Implementation of the study programmes of the study direction ensures implementation of ViA’s mission: to promote sustainable development of the knowledge society at the regional and national level, providing a private and public sector with the high-level professionals, as well as conducting research to solve related public problems. These study programmes support also achievement of other strategic goals, such as providing high-quality lifelong learning opportunities for all, contributing to the personal and professional development of each individual.

In general, three priorities are defined for the development of the ICS study direction in accordance with ViA Development Strategy for 2016-2020, specifying the strategic goal and directions of

activity for each priority.

Priority 1: studies

Strategic goal – to provide internationally competitive and high quality education and to prepare highly qualified specialists for work in the chosen fields and further studies in higher level study programmes both in Latvia and abroad.

Priority 1 – activity directions:

- to ensure and maintain the high-quality studies, including to develop a student-centred approach;
- to develop and approbate new study courses, to prepare new innovative study programmes;
- to develop study courses in foreign languages, to develop joint and double degree programmes.

Priority 2: research

Strategic goal – to develop and continue innovation-driven research in communication and information science.

Priority 2 – activity directions:

- to involve actively in the activities of the Institute for Social, Economic and Humanities Research and to implement research projects;
- to conduct research relevant to the region and the State;
- to get involved in international research and to cooperate in carrying out research with other higher education and scientific institutions.

Priority 3: knowledge transfer

Strategic goal – to strengthen and improve cooperation with important partners in Latvia and abroad in order to ensure high-quality study programmes and research, and a study and research environment that supports innovations.

Priority 3 – activity directions:

- to cooperate with industry employers, industry professional organizations;
- to cooperate with the regional administration, local governments, companies in the region, NGOs, public institutions at the national level;
- to cooperate with other higher education institutions, research institutes in Latvia and abroad.

The media sector in Latvia as a whole continues to develop and stabilize after the economic crisis in 2007. This is evidenced by the activity and involvement of communication professionals and professional organizations of journalists, such as the Latvian Association of Journalists, in discussions relevant for society, participation of sector's professional organizations in decision-making processes. The Media Policy Department established by the Ministry of Culture, although small in terms of staff, is a major step towards arranging media field and developing modern media regulation.

Similar situation is in the field of communication/PR because as democratic values get stronger and civil society develops, public participation in the private and public sectors, as well as social responsibility of any company or organization towards environment in which they work become more and more important, thus creating added value.

Study programmes offered by the ICS study direction ensure also improvement of students' digital skills and competences, contributing to the development of information society. This is particularly important because Vidzeme Planning Region has identified the development of new business areas in the knowledge economy as one of the strategic goals of smart specialization in the region. The region has potential for the development of creative industries, including entrepreneurship related to the audiovisual sector, communication, new media solutions. Valmiera has a business and innovation incubator where graduates from the Information and Communication Science study direction find opportunities to start their own business in the media and communication field. Graduates have an opportunity to set up their own businesses by creating and delivering innovative services in the area of information, communication and media. Education obtained while acquiring the ICS study programmes provides for opportunities to promote the development of creative economy in Latvia based on intangible resources: knowledge, creative ideas and innovations, raising students' awareness of innovation and entrepreneurship, including motivating them to focus on entrepreneurship, development of innovative ideas and solutions and their further development using modern technologies. Thus, self-employment of graduates and establishment of new innovative enterprises are promoted, thus furthering the development of the national economy, contributing to the development of the region, using the knowledge, ideas, experience and contacts acquired during the studies. By encouraging students to develop innovation and creativity, the study direction contributes to the development of Vidzeme region, as well as the Latvian national economy. Graduates from the programmes implemented in this direction can successfully engage in entrepreneurship, as well as have good careers in public and government institutions, municipal authorities, media, non-governmental organizations and other institutions that require an extensive range of basic knowledge of social processes, as well as analytical thinking and creativity competencies.

Qualified communication and media managers and specialists, as well as journalists are demanded in the labour market in Latvia. According to the estimates of the Ministry of Economics, the demand will remain in the group of professions "senior specialists of legal, social and cultural affairs", which includes both journalists and communication specialists. This tendency is also confirmed by feedback of the undergraduate programme internship providers. The role of professional and well-trained journalists has become particularly important at the national level in view of increasing risks associated with the spread of disinformation in the Latvian information space and the need for well-trained professionals capable of acting professionally, ethically and responsibly. In general, there is a space for activities opening up in the field of communication - development of the field, its popularization and public information, inter alia, science communication, for example, becomes more and more important; the teaching staff of the ICS study direction participates in its strengthening since 2018 by helping to develop the science communication strategy of Latvia. Graduates of the ICS study direction generally have great opportunities to compete in the labour market and to be active developers of the industry.

The development of students' creativity and entrepreneurial skills is highlighted as an important aspect of the programmes implemented in the ICS study direction, and is one of the elements that, according to professionals, will facilitate the employment of the graduates in the future. It is known that the future challenge for young professionals will be the need to offer innovative and internationally competitive products to the market. Internship supervisors emphasize in their feedback that creativity, initiative and responsibility for work tasks are important elements for young professionals to have a successful career. In this respect, it is positive that industry professionals are involved in the study process by teaching study courses or guest lectures in the programmes implemented in the ICS study direction, development of cooperation projects with the companies of the industry. The positive aspect is also an opportunity for students to do internship in the companies of the field every year, because in this way they get to know the environment of

the field very well already during their studies and can perceive their future opportunities. Likewise, focusing on innovation is fostered by internship experience in foreign companies; ICS students are relatively active in using Erasmus funding for this purpose. According to industry professionals, future communication professionals will increasingly need competencies and knowledge related to strategic communication, sustainability, management of influencing parties, operativeness in crisis communication, and narration. These are the elements that are gradually and purposefully incorporated into the content of all study programmes implemented in the ICS study direction.

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

In order to ensure successful implementation of the study programmes in the ICS study direction, the strengths and challenges of the study direction, as well as development opportunities and resources for their achievement are identified.

Strengths of the study direction which open up perspectives for development:

- study programmes contribute to strengthening public safety and sustainability at the national and international level;
- a highly qualified team of the teaching staff is involved in the implementation of the programmes, there is a balance between academic staff and professionals from the communication field;
- Master's study programmes are implemented both in Latvian and English, therefore they have the potential to attract international students;
- study content is interdisciplinary;
- study methods (social simulations, etc.) used in the study programmes promote innovation in the field of higher education pedagogy in communication science;
- study content is closely related to research work carried out by the teaching staff;
- elected teaching staff of the ICS study direction is highly motivated to achieve high results, focused on development, innovation, cooperation in science and academic work, as well as focused on building cooperation with the industry;
- the study programmes combine theoretical knowledge and practical courses, enabling graduates to develop a more successful career after graduation;
- there is a system in place and operating to control the quality of studies;
- students have access to a modern library;
- students have an opportunity to do internship and work in a multimedia laboratory within the framework of studies, which helps test the knowledge acquired and strengthen practical skills;
- conditions (infrastructure, staff support) appropriate for a creative and successful study process are provided;
- cooperation with industry representatives is maintained, therefore, it is possible to react actively to changes in the field of communication by developing study programmes

accordingly.

Challenges/weaknesses:

- There is a small number of elected lecturers in the ICS study direction; the new study programmes and the active scientific work increase the work load, the question arises how to successfully balance the academic load with scientific work and participation in projects;
- ViA has only recently launched targeted activities to attract students from Eastern Partnership countries; accordingly, working with international students is new experience and, at the same time, an opportunity for growth;
- ViA's budget resources, unless project funds are attracted, are not sufficient to pay for regular professional development of the staff;
- There are difficulties to attract a large number of high-level guest lecturers from abroad within the framework of ViA's budget without additional external funding;
- It is necessary to upgrade equipment of the Multimedia Laboratory on a regular basis as technology is both rapidly aging and wearing out.

Threats:

- Insufficient funding for higher education, public funding for social sciences is reduced after the economic crisis in 2007. As a result of it, remuneration for some industry professionals is not attractive enough to engage in teaching;
- Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the interest of potential students in studies or continuation of studies (at the master's level) which is not possible to combine with full time work;
- Demographic situation in Latvia – decreasing number of potential students;
- Economic situation and solvency of potential students;
- A number of external factors – upcoming changes in the education policy, issues regarding management of higher education institutions;
- Education level of secondary school graduates is getting lower each year.

The Development plan of the ICS study direction that is attached was developed within the SAM 8.2.1. project, taking into account the results of the SWOT analysis. The development plan is reviewed once a year, when the self-assessment report of the study field is created. The director of the study field in cooperation with the self-assessment report development working group performs an analysis of the implementation of the development plan.

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

The ICS direction is a part of the Faculty of Social Sciences, which is administratively supervised by the dean of the faculty. The Faculty Council makes decisions on changes to the programmes, elects teaching staff, approves visiting lecturers and the State examination commissions. Student representatives from the study programmes implemented by the Faculty of Social Sciences participate in the activities of the council. The management structure of the study direction is

shown in [Annex 7](#). The management structure ensures effective and democratic decision-making with the participation of students. Directors of the study directions regularly exchange information, they have meetings once a month, and they maintain regular communication with the dean of the faculty. Once a month, there are meetings of the ICS study direction council which is attended by the elected lecturers of the study direction in accordance with the Council Regulations. The meetings are recorded in the minutes, and the director of the study direction ensures the exchange of information regarding decisions made with the relevant structural units. Issues related to strategic changes to the study programmes, internal quality assessment (self-assessment reports, questionnaires, etc.) and preparation for external assessment (licensing, accreditation) are referred by the director of the study direction to the faculty council and, if necessary, to ViA Senate. Direct supervision and operational management of the direction is carried out by the director of the study direction. The director of the study direction is supported by a study specialist.

Several structural units of ViA support implementation of the study programmes of the study direction. Below is a detailed description of each structural unit and its role in the implementation of the study programme.

Institute of Social, Economic and Humanities Research

The Institute of Social, Economic and Humanities Research (hereinafter – HESPI) is a structural unit of ViA established by the decision of ViA Senate on 25 September 2013. HESPI is registered with the Register of Scientific Institutes of the Republic of Latvia on 28 November 2013. The main research directions of the Institute are as follows:

- Sustainable development of the national economy,
- Sustainable tourism, micro-niches in tourism,
- Development of protected nature and cultural territories,
- Cultural space and development of cultural identity sites,
- Latvian social security system,
- Social investment,
- Innovation management,
- Science communication,
- Online communication and online media,
- Regional development (interaction between rural and urban environments).

Teaching staff of the ICS study direction is involved in HESPI research (in 2018, project “Integration of third country nationals by involving mass media” (INTEGRA3MEDIA); project “New forms of European citizenship in migration era” (NECME), in 2019, projects of the State Research Programme “Values in action: promotion of responsible, secure and educated civil society in Latvia through research and behaviour model development” in cooperation with Riga Stradins University, project “The significance of documentary heritage research in the development of synergies between research and society” in cooperation with the National Library of Latvia, etc.). In 2020: Valmiera municipality Targeted study "Communication Challenges and Opportunities in the Process of Changes Caused by Administrative Territorial Reform", National Research Program Project "Life with Covid-19: Assessment of Coronavir Crisis Management in Latvia and Proposals for Future Society Sustainability (COVID Life)". The institute plays an important role in the development of the ICS study direction because it ensures the achievement of the priority 2 goal (research).

Socio-Technical Systems Engineering Institute (SSI)

ViA Socio-Technical Systems Engineering Institute was founded in July 2006. Research directions:

- Logistics information systems and RFID technologies;
- Business process modelling;

- Modelling of hybrid imitation systems;
- Use of virtual and augmented reality in training.

SSI is developing joint projects regarding the use of virtual and augmented reality in transmedia narration, as well as regarding development of social simulations for modernization of communication study methods (Erasmus+ strategic partnership project “Simulation Games in Strategic Communication” with the Universities of Tartu and Vilnius).

ViA study process is supported by the **Administrative Department**. The main functions and tasks of the department are as follows: study administration, international cooperation administration, IT infrastructure coordination, ViA operational management, financial management and accounting, marketing and public relations, as well as document management and circulation, and internal communication. A detailed description of each function is given below.

Study administration:

- to plan, organize and administer study processes: student enrolment, planning of the academic year, planning of study places funded by the State budget, student registration, rotation, scholarships, reports to external cooperation partners;
- to ensure maintenance and development of the study information system;
- to manage and organize study record keeping and to ensure circulation, registration and archiving of study records;
- to maintain a database of graduates and conduct graduate surveys;

International Cooperation Administration:

- to organize ViA international activities in cooperation with academic and scientific prorectors and faculties;
- to ensure international mobility of ViA students, international students and staff;
- to establish and maintain ViA international cooperation partner network;

IT infrastructure coordination - systems, servers, computer networks, computers:

- to install and configure new hardware, including servers;
- to repair and maintain computer hardware;
- to equip ViA lecture-rooms with the equipment necessary for the study process;
- to ensure independent and qualitative operation of ViA computer network and to establish new connections of the existing computer network;
- to promote professional development of ViA staff in IT issues;
- to ensure protection of ViA information systems against third party intrusion;

ViA operational management and maintenance of the material and technical base:

- to maintain and repair electric power system, heating system, water and sewerage systems, ventilation and air conditioning systems, fire safety, alarm and notification systems;
- to ensure purchase and production of household goods, equipment and furniture for ViA needs;
- to provide record keeping, installation and maintenance of inventory and furniture;
- to ensure cleaning and improvement of ViA buildings, their premises and plots of land, including preparation of study premises for lectures;
- to run a hostel;
- to ensure compliance with the requirements of the regulations of establishment, labour protection and ViA internal regulations in ViA buildings;

Financial management and accounting:

- to develop ViA draft budget and submit it to ViA Senate for approval;
- to control rational use of ViA's financial resources;
- to analyze ViA financial indicators;
- to keep record of the use of ViA funds in accordance with the approved estimates, as well as of liabilities and claims according to the laws and other regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia;
- to control the acquisition, use and management of material resources;
- to ensure organization and documentation of procurement procedures.

Marketing and public relations:

- to implement internal and external communication;
- to develop and implement ViA brand, marketing and PR strategy and operational plan;
- to coordinate ViA marketing activities by cooperating with various ViA structural units, other public and municipal entities and private entrepreneurs;
- to organize and participate in ViA marketing events in Latvia and abroad;

Organizing ViA documentation management and circulation and ensuring internal communication:

- to organize and manage circulation of documents at ViA, ensuring record keeping, registration of documents, preparation of orders, powers of attorney, statements, drafts of outgoing documents;
- to provide support to ViA management and staff in record keeping matters;
- to archive documents.

Library

Main functions and tasks of the library:

- to conduct planning for the development of the Library stock;
- to provide the ViA academic and scientific research process with media from the Library Collection and through an Interlibrary subscription from libraries in Latvia and abroad;
- to store and systemise information on ViA history.
- in cooperation with headquarters and teaching staff;
- coordinating the provision of the academic process with library resources;
- building the Library's stock according to the directions of ViA's studies and scientific work, the requirements of the courses of study, by co-operating and coordinating resources in cooperation with the Valmiera Library;
- stockpiling, systematising, cataloguing, librarisation and preservation of printed publications, electronic publications, handwriting and other documents;
- to provide the Library's collection, incl. availability of electronic databases for the implementation of independent studies and research;
- the development and development of a database of ViA academic staff and student authorizations;
- advise ViA academic staff and students on the use of informative resources.

Rectorate - Rector, Academic and Science ProRector, Administrative Prorector, Assistant Rector - Scientific Secretary, Lawyer - Personal Specialist. Main functions and tasks of the rectorate:

- Strategic management of the ViA;
- ViA personnel management;
- legal aid;
- Science management;

- Development, management and monitoring of projects.

Knowledge and Technology Centre (KTC)

Main functions and tasks of KTC:

- promoting knowledge transfer, applied research and the development of the ViA infrastructure through the funding of projects at regional, national and international level;
- working with education providers in the Vidzeme region to ensure that education is accessible and offered to all target groups, by bringing together the legal and natural persons involved in adult education, promoting their activities and cooperation to achieve the objectives of KTC;
- developing and maintaining cooperation with other educational and scientific institutions in the Vidzeme region by offering their services in the field of knowledge and technology transfer;
- to establish and maintain contacts with partners in the private, public and non-governmental sector and to promote feedback with ViA;
- to operate networks of lifelong learning partners: universities, scientific institutions, Entrepreneurs, Associations, Adult Education Centres and Graduates.

The management structure of the study direction is shown in [Annex 7](#)

The efficiency of the existing management structure has proved itself in the process of promoting and maintaining the quality of study programs implemented in the ICS study direction, promoting international cooperation, as well as ensuring cooperation links with the industry. In particular, the aspect of cooperation and mutual support should be noted taking into account that significant changes and developments have taken place in the ICS study direction in the previous accreditation period, creating two new study programs. This process required very close cooperation between all the departments involved. As a second aspect, it should be mentioned that scientific research activities are very widely implemented in the ICS study direction, which would also be not possible without the administrative support of other structural units of ViA, communicative support, provision of various resources and other types of involvement according to the profile of each structural unit.

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

Admission criteria to ViA study programmes are approved by ViA Senate, which, in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia, approves admission requirements to ViA undergraduate and postgraduate programmes by November 1. When applying for admission to the undergraduate programmes, the applicant or his/her authorized representative should complete an application and present a passport or ID card, a certificate of secondary education, certificates of centralized examinations specified in the admission regulations, documents permitting admission beyond competition if a specific criterion is specified in the regulations ([see Annex 8](#)).

When applying for postgraduate programmes, the applicant or his/her authorized representative should fill in an application and present a passport or ID card, a document of higher education, as well as documents stated in the programme requirements (*see Annex 8*).

International applicants should additionally present a certificate of English proficiency in internationally recognized examinations TOEFL (minimum 500 points for the test taken on-the-spot and 70 points for the online test), IELTS (minimum 6.0 points) or other evidence of English language proficiency. If previous education is acquired in English, evidence of English language proficiency is not required. In addition, a statement from the Latvian Academic Information Centre on the compliance of the education obtained abroad with the requirements of the admission regulations should be submitted.

It is possible to apply for the first-year undergraduate studies at ViA electronically in the Information System of Single Admission to Undergraduate Programmes (VUPP IS) through the e-service on the portal www.latvija.lv.

It is possible to apply for studies in master's level programs at ViA electronically using the ViA electronic application form magistri.va.lv.

Information about ViA study directions and study programmes is published on ViA website www.va.lv. ViA Administrative Department (Marketing Group and Study Administration Group) is responsible for publishing the information.

In accordance with the Cabinet Regulations No. 932, it is possible to start studies at ViA at a later study stages, subject to the requirements of the regulations regarding the mandatory amount of credit points, which is equalized to the content of ViA study programmes. Recognition of study results obtained in previous education is a regular procedure for any student who has started studies at a later stage and who, in accordance with international cooperation agreements, has studied for a period of studies (one to two semesters) at a foreign university. In this case, the comparison of study results is performed by the director of the study program, when the student has submitted the supporting documents (academic certificate or diploma with a diploma supplement for previously obtained higher education). The equivalence of study results with the study results obtained within the framework of the international exchange program is performed on the basis of the university cooperation agreement, the tripartite study agreement (Erasmus learning agreement) and the certificate on the acquired study courses.

In accordance with the Cabinet Regulations No.505, every person has the right to submit an application to ViA for recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired in previous education or professional experience in the study programme implemented by the higher education institution or part thereof. Information on recognition of non-formal education or professional experience is also available on the ViA website (*information on the website is available in Latvian, the regulations in English are available in Annex 9*). The study results achieved by a person while studying (the student has been matriculated) in the study program are recognized in accordance with the Cabinet Regulation No. 932 of 16 November 2004 "Procedure for Starting Studies in Later Study Stages".

The decision on the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside formal education or acquired in professional experience, as well as on the recognition of study results achieved in previous education is made by the Study Results Recognition Commission established by ViA. In accordance with the Regulations on the Recognition of Competences Acquired Outside Formal Education or Professional Experience and Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Education (see Annex 9), a person must submit an application for recognition of knowledge, skills and competences. The procedure for recognition of study results is described in the above-

mentioned regulations.

Refer to the annex for ViA admission rules (see Annex 8).

Refer to the annex for ViA regulations on the recognition of competences acquired outside formal education or through professional experience and on the recognition of learning outcomes achieved in previous education (see Annex 9).

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

The implementation of the students' assessment procedure is supervised and controlled by the management of the academic structural unit responsible for the implementation of the programme, Study Administration Group of the Administrative Department and the academic and scientific prorector. Student assessment takes place within the framework of the study courses, defence of internship, annual projects, Bachelor's and Master's theses. The main student assessment principles are as follows: obligation (it is necessary to get a positive mark for the entire content of the study programme), openness of assessment (public availability of approved and defined assessment criteria in course descriptions, Regulations regarding Annual Projects and State Examinations, Regulations of Internship, as well as students receive lecturer's explanation of the grade), besides, the students' right to appeal against the received assessment (the procedure is laid down in ViA Study Regulations), as well as the principle of diversity of assessment forms: 1) students are involved in the assessment process, for example, assessing each other's contribution to group work, reviewing group members' study papers, etc., as well as 2) a lecturer uses different forms of assessment during the course, for example, some of the study papers are evaluated as "passed", others are marked with a mark, etc. The assessment of research papers, in its turn, consists of the assessment of the members of the examination commission, supervisor, and in case of a qualification paper, also of the reviewer of the paper. The final theses are evaluated by industry professionals who are included in the Bachelor's/Master's thesis defence commission by the decision of the Faculty Council. It is planned that more than 50% of the commission members of the graduation thesis assessment commission are industry professionals. The description of each study course includes information on the assessment criteria and forms. At the beginning of the course, the lecturer discusses the terms of assessment with the students. It is obligatory for the lecturer to prepare and give the students a full description of the course (electronically or in printed form) at the beginning of the course, to discuss the course plan and content, as well as the requirements and deadlines for individual or group work.

Assessment criteria of research papers (annual projects, Bachelor's theses, Master's theses) are defined and available to students on ViA e-environment. The teaching staff is responsible for providing public accessibility of the assessment criteria to the students, while the director of the study direction provides general supervision. Terms regarding student absenteeism, sickness, and other justified circumstances are included in the course descriptions. These measures ensure that students are informed on the assessment strategy, examinations and other assessment techniques that will be used, what they will be expected to do, and which criteria will be used to assess their performance. It is the responsibility of the lecturer to provide students with feedback and substantiate assessments received during the course. In case of doubt, students consult with the

teaching staff of the particular study courses or with the director of the study direction. These measures ensure that assessments serve as an opportunity for students to assess both their academic progress and opportunities for further growth and improvement of their skills or knowledge.

Refer to the annex for ViA Study Regulations (see Annex 10).

Refer to the annex for the course descriptions of ViA study programmes, internship regulations and methodological guidelines for writing academic papers can be viewed in the report next to the description of each study program.

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

In 2017, ViA approved the Regulations of Ethics, which emphasize the importance of ViA's ethical values and the environment that promotes morally responsible behaviour. The Regulations contain the basic ethical principles and norms that ViA personnel (students, academic and general staff) must observe in their attitude towards ViA, in their work, in their relations with other ViA representatives and society. One of the basic principles is respect for academic and research ethics. In this regard, ViA staff is determined to treat the study and research process and those involved therein with integrity. In academic and scientific research, the staff respects copyright, intellectual property, work results of others, and guarantees the truthfulness of the data used and analysis performed in research. Independence from sponsors is an important principle, and it is necessary to recognize the contribution of all persons involved in research. In accordance with ViA Regulations of Academic Ethics, an Academic Ethics Commission is established, consisting of two representatives of the academic staff nominated by each Faculty Council and one student representative. The composition of the Council is approved by ViA Senate for a term of two years. In general, ViA has a strategically chosen approach to prevent violations of academic integrity. Lecturers are introduced to the principles of academic integrity upon commencing employment relationships with ViA. Students are introduced to the principles of academic integrity and other aspects mentioned in the Code of Ethics during the introductory studies, as well as the principles of academic integrity are acquired and potential risk cases are analyzed within the framework of the courses "Academic Writing", "Research Methodology I", "Research Methodology" II", supervisors of the annual projects discuss them with the students, and supervisors of the State examination discuss them with the students as they work on their papers. This ensures that all parties involved receive information and a reminder of the Principles of Academic Integrity on a regular basis, and can consult on academic integrity issues in a timely manner.

ViA lecturers participate in the creation of a joint academic integrity platform for all HEIs in Latvia. The platform is designed to provide lecturers and researchers with online access to research and methodological material on academic and research ethics, and to pass a mandatory test once a year (by October 1 each year) to update knowledge and remind them of the fundamental principles of academic integrity. The test can be repeated several times until the required score is reached. There are also seminars for lecturers and researchers (at least once per semester), as well as workshops for lecturers and researchers (at least once per semester) on topics such as academic and research ethics case studies, plagiarism recognition, action on academic and research ethics

violations, promotion of academic and research ethics, etc.

Starting from 2017, ViA has entered into the agreement with the University of Latvia on the use of the *Unified Computerized Plagiarism Control System*, one of ViA's essential anti-plagiarism tools. In order to monitor the observance of academic ethics, preventive work is regularly performed also during the implementation of study courses. Information on the observance of academic ethics is also indicated in the descriptions of the study course.

According to the order (which is issued every semester) regarding submission of the final papers, students have to upload their papers to the study information system LAIS, which is synchronized with the plagiarism control system. In situations where there are suspects regarding student paper, the plagiarism control system is also used to check course papers or annual projects. Mutual cooperation on the use of the *Unified Computerized Plagiarism Control System* has already involved 27 Latvian higher education institutions.

ViA's Code of Ethics and Ethics Violation Scheme can be found in the annex to the report (see Annex 11).

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

Information about ViA study directions and offered study programs is published on ViA website www.va.lv. For information publishing is responsible ViA Administrative Department (Marketing Group and Study Administration Group).

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

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

The internal quality system of ViA and, consequently, the system on the level of ICS study direction is based on European and national legislation, which defines the basic principles of higher education development. The following text provides an overview of various aspects of the quality assurance system specifically in the ICS study direction.

ViA has developed and approved a development strategy for 2016-2020, which envisages the pursuit of excellence and competitiveness in education, the pursuit of excellence and competitiveness in science and research, as well as knowledge transfer and investment in the development of the region. The strategy results in a number of measures to ensure the quality and

standards of study programs and degrees to be awarded, which is binding also to the ICS study direction. Administrative and accounting control over the study programs implemented in the study direction is exercised by the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Faculty of Social Sciences regularly (once a month) decides on actual questions in the ICS study direction during the meetings of the Faculty Council. The Faculty Council approves study program self-evaluation reports, changes in the study programs, makes decisions on announcing vacancies for academic staff, as well as evaluates the candidates. Every year, the development of the ICS study direction is evaluated during the development and discussion of the self-assessment report both within the study field, at the faculty level, and in the ViA Senate.

The university has approved a number of documents that determine the relationship between teaching and research, the institution's quality and requirements strategy, as well as the organization of the quality assurance system. A regulation has been developed on the responsibility of faculties, fields of study and other structural units and persons for quality assurance, as well as on students' participation in quality assurance, and on the ways of implementing, monitoring and adjusting quality policy. These documents are also binding in the activities of the ICS study direction and are taken into account in daily work.

Students are informed about the internal normative regulation of ViA. They receive information both in the introductory studies and later in the study process. Students receive information about their rights and opportunities to participate in the development and implementation of ViA development policy. Students participate in the work of the faculty council, as well as the Senate. Every semester, the director of the study field meets with ICS students, ViA students' self-government also implements its activities.

Every year, ViA conducts a survey of students' opinions on the compliance of the study programs implemented at the university with the student's expectations, on the quality of study programs, on information and material and technical provision, on the quality of academic staff, on the quality of international cooperation and other issues. The results of the surveys are analyzed and evaluated, as well as decisions on various changes and improvements are made on the basis of them. The received answers are used in development planning and improvement of the ICS operation. At the level of the study field, the director of the ICS study direction meets with the students twice during the academic year and discusses various topical issues, listens to the students' opinions and suggestions. In each group of students, a group leader is selected every year, who coordinates the communication between the student group and the director of the ICS study direction. These are all ways to get in-depth feedback from students, plan and make various changes both in terms of course planning by semesters, involvement of lecturers in teaching specific courses, replenishment of library collections, and other aspects related to the organization of studies and quality assurance.

ViA also conducts a survey of graduates every year. Its main goal is to document the satisfaction of graduates with the acquired education immediately after the end of studies, as well as to collect data on the employment of graduates. The survey is conducted one year after graduation. In general, it must be said that there is a tendency that graduates of bachelor's programs implemented in the ICS study direction quickly and successfully enter the labor market and work in accordance with the acquired qualification. Surveys on graduates employment should also be conducted with a greater time distance in order to analyze graduates' career dynamics, professional development in the chosen field over a longer period of time. However, this would require additional investments from ViA, therefore, at the level of study fields, data collection takes place as much as possible, with lecturers and study field directors maintaining contacts with graduates on social media, meeting at public events and in other ways. One of the factors that could be assessed as graduates' professional growth (and to a large extent also satisfaction with the acquired education) is the active involvement of graduates in the study process after

graduation, which manifests itself in various forms - guest lectures, research topics and internships. and other forms of involvement. It should be noted that graduates are active participants in the Latvian Communication Association, the Latvian Association of Public Relations Professionals, the Latvian Association of Journalists, etc.

For additional information see Part I, point 1.3.

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

Development, approval and updating of study programs and their components in ViA takes place in accordance with defined procedures of the development of study programs and lifelong learning courses, also development, approval, monitoring and updating of curricula and their components. The study programs and their components are designed to meet the objectives which are in line with the ViA strategy. Programs are developed using the help and consultations of external stakeholders and in such a way as to meet the defined learning outcomes according to the Latvian and European Qualifications Framework, and to promote higher education goals - personal growth and employment, civil society and an expanded knowledge base.

The Study Regulations' document is approved by the Senate, and it determines the procedures for the implementation of study programs, the rights and obligations of students, the procedure for financing studies and the general procedure for organizing final examinations. In the descriptions of Study courses the requirements for attending the course, the goals and planned study results are defined, the content of the course, the calendar plan, compulsory literature, additional literature and other sources of information, the description of the organization and tasks of students' independent work given as well as the criteria for assessing the study results.

The mentioned documents and procedures are binding in the ICS study direction. During the last accreditation period, two new study programs were created in the study direction, and ViA's internal as well as external regulatory enactments were obeyed in all steps. Both study programs successfully received licenses. During the development of the study programs, great support was received from external stakeholders - the Ministry of Culture, the State Chancellery, various professionals in the field. Strategic communication consultant Ieva Zaumane was especially involved in the development of the concept and content planning of the study program "Strategic Communication and Governance". Currently, the existing study programs also undergo certain changes for the maintenance of the study quality, for example, at the end of 2020 (December) in the ICS study direction with the financial support of the SAM 8.2.2. project, Kārlis Dagilis, a representative of the Latvian Radio, will start working to audit the study program "Media Studies and Journalism" and prepare a concept for the content improvement and marketing of the study program for potential target audiences. This is done taking into account that a decrease in the number of students is happening, as well as, in general, the interest in pure journalism studies in Latvia is declining, as public relations programs seem more attractive to young people.

Every year, ViA conducts a survey of students' opinions on the compliance of the study programs

implemented at the university with the student's expectations, on the quality of study programs, on information and material and technical provision, on the quality of academic staff, on the quality of international cooperation and other issues. The results of the surveys are analyzed and evaluated, as well as decisions on various changes and improvements are made on the basis of them. The received answers are used in development planning and improvement of the ICS operation. At the level of the study field, the director of the ICS study direction meets with the students twice during the academic year and discusses various topical issues, listens to the students' opinions and suggestions. In each group of students, a group leader is selected every year, who coordinates the communication between the student group and the director of the ICS study direction. These are all ways to get in-depth feedback from students, plan and make various changes both in terms of course planning by semesters, involvement of lecturers in teaching specific courses, replenishment of library collections, and other aspects related to the organization of studies and quality assurance.

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Also see Part I, point 1.3.

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

In addition to student surveys in the ICS study direction, there is a regular exchange of information with students at the level of management of the ICS study direction, lecturers and senior specialist. Students can submit a proposal (less often - complaints) both orally and by e-mail. Each year, one course representative is appointed in each group of students, who ensures communication with the director of the study direction. A separate whatsapp group has been formed with the course representatives for faster information exchange. Particularly important communication with students, consulting their opinions and proactive action from the study direction director was

necessary because of the changes in the study process caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both the director of the study direction and the lecturers proactively communicated with the students during and outside the online classes, listened to the students' comments about the study process. Every month, at the meeting of the study field council, the issues of the study process and students' suggestions are discussed. Based on the students suggestions, the director of the study direction has invited the lecturers to align the submission of the final theses with the deadlines of set in other courses, as well as to evaluate the need for extensive group work, taking into account the students' difficulties in doing independent work due to geographical distance. Students are always informed about these activities by e-mail and orally, thus receiving feedback.

In general, in the past accreditation period, the cooperation between students and the director of the study direction and lecturers can be evaluated positively - students' proposals have been taken into account and appropriate changes have been made in study programs. One remarkable example is the study program "Media and Information Literacy", in the first year of implementation of which the director of the ICS study direction met with students in person at the end of each semester to discuss students' experiences and hear proposals for changes in the study program. At the bachelor's level, one of the improvements that took place at the initiative of students was a change in the internship regulations of the study program "Media Studies and Journalism", to include the possibility for students to undergo a communication internship in one study year to gain experience not only in journalism, but also PR.

See also Part I, points 1.3. and 1.7.

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

Various student profile data and student number statistics are used to make decisions about development and improvement of the study programmes included in the study direction. Statistical reports are compiled as necessary, distinguishing between mandatory (in accordance with the Cabinet regulations) and optional statistics (as needed), while the information to be collected is considered according to the purpose stated in the decision.

Surveys of applicants, students and graduates are an important source of information for the improvement of study programs in the ICS study direction. Based on the surveys of applicants, it has been decided to improve marketing activities, for example, by launching separate activities for master's level students in the summer of 2020, because the overall direction of ViA's marketing campaigns is focused on attracting bachelor's students. For this purpose, the funding from the SZF development grant was allocated.

Surveys of students after each study course allow both the lecturer to evaluate the course and achieved results, as well as student satisfaction, as well as the director of the study direction to control the quality of the course and make changes if necessary (for example, change the course lecturer, change the course content, change the amount of the course in credit points, change the course time in the study program plan, etc.). Based on the assessment of students, for example, lecturers have been changed in the multimedia study courses at the bachelor's level, as well as the semester of delivery the multimedia courses have been specified in the study program plan.

Graduate surveys allow to evaluate the contribution of study programs to the preparation of qualified labor force for the labor market. One of the study courses, which was introduced at the bachelor's level thanks to the graduates' recommendations, is "Argumentation and Critical Thinking", as well as the content of the Academic Writing course is supplemented with Latvian grammar lessons.

Statistical data on applicants, student numbers and graduates are regularly compiled (*see Table No.1*).

Table No. 1. *Types of statistical data reports compiled by ViA*

<i>Type of statistics</i>	<i>Regularity</i>	<i>Profile (upon request)</i>	<i>Necessity</i>	<i>Statistics are compiled by</i>
Applicants	After each admission and upon request	Number of applicants Place of residence Educational institution Number of applications Admission competition Funding etc.	Admission analysis Admission planning Planning of marketing activities Improvement of the study programme Planning of budget places Self-assessment reports, etc.	Study administration group
Students	Each month and upon request	Number of students Funding Average and weighted grades Drop-out etc.	Improvement of the study programme Planning of budget places Self-assessment reports Rotation Scholarships, etc.	Study administration group
Graduates	After graduation and upon request	Number of graduates Funding Average and weighted grades Topics of graduation theses	Improvement of the study programme Planning of budget places Self-assessment evaluation reports, etc.	Study administration group

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

Table No.2. *Description and assessment of ESG Part 1 standard integration.*

Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) - Part 1	How will be ESG complied with within the study direction

1.1. Quality assurance policy

ViA Development Strategy for 2016-2020 envisages the pursuit of excellence and competitiveness in education, the pursuit of excellence and competitiveness in science and research, as well as the transfer of knowledge and contribution to regional development. The strategy contains a number of measures to ensure the quality and standards of the study programmes and degrees to be awarded. Strategic control over ViA development is exercised by ViA Senate, while administrative and accounting control is exercised by the Faculty of Social Sciences. Every year, the development of the ICS direction is assessed during the preparation and discussion of the self-assessment report both within the study direction at the faculty level and also in ViA Senate. ViA has approved a number of documents that define relationships between teaching and research, the quality and requirements strategy of the institution, and the organization of the quality assurance system. There is a framework of responsibilities for quality assurance developed for the faculties, study directions and other structural units and individuals, as well as for student participation in quality assurance, and the ways through which the quality policy is implemented, monitored and adjusted. Assessment criteria of the study courses are defined in the course descriptions. Assessment criteria of annual projects, Bachelor's theses and Master's theses are defined in the Regulations for the development and defence of annual projects, Bachelor's theses and Master's theses.

1.2. Development and approval of the programmes

ViA has developed and approved a procedure for the development, approval and supervision of the study programmes and their components for approval and supervision of ViA study programmes and degrees to be awarded. In 2018, an order "Regarding establishing advisory councils of the study programmes and self-assessment report work groups" was issued, as well as these Regulations were approved by the Faculty Councils; composition of the Councils are reviewed on an annual basis. Study programmes are developed together with the industry representatives and in accordance with ViA development strategy, promoting achievement of the priorities of the study direction development plans, and promoting higher education tasks - to promote personal growth and employability, the development of civil society and an expanded base of knowledge ([see Annex 5](#)).

1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

All normative documents are available to both students and academic staff on ViA e-environment. Students are informed both on their rights and possibilities to participate in the development and implementation of ViA development policy in the introductory studies and also later during the study process. Each semester, the director of the study direction meets with the ICS students and discusses both experience of the previous semester and events of the next semester, listens to suggestions and complaints of the students. Through email, as well as during face-to-face meetings, the director provides feedback on solutions to students' complaints, taken decisions or actions to deal with the problems identified. ViA student self-government implements various activities to inform students and to receive feedback from them; it delegates also candidates for ViA Senate and Constitutional Assembly elections, organizes meetings with ViA Rector and/or directors of the study directions, as necessary.

ViA study course descriptions include requirements specified in the Law on Higher Education Institutions ensuring that assessment criteria and methods are made publicly available to students at the beginning of each study course. Descriptions of study courses define requirements for the commencement of the study course, the goal and planned learning outcomes, outlines the content of the study course necessary for achieving study results, include a study calendar, compulsory and additional literature, indicate other sources of information, describe organization and tasks of students' independent work, define criteria for evaluation of study results. The lecturer is obliged to give feedback on each assessment.

The study direction ensures fair and consistent assessment, and these issues are discussed annually at the Council meetings of the study direction. At the same time, individual solutions are offered to the students with learning disabilities or other facilitating conditions (for example, to present speech in the course "Public Speaking" without the presence of other students, etc.). However, under no circumstances a student can get an automatic pass without passing the exam. Commissions consisting of more than one examiner are set up to assess student research papers. The procedure for reviewing student appeals is described in the Study Regulations. Students are informed on the possibilities of appeal during the introductory studies.

1.4. Matriculation of students, study process, recognition of qualifications and certification

There is a policy developed for ensuring the quality and standards of the study programmes and degrees or qualifications to be awarded, as well as other documents and regulations related to the high quality study process, including ViA Study Regulations, the Appeals Procedure, Regulations of Ethics. Admission requirements for ViA study programmes are defined in ViA Admission Rules. They are publicly available on the ViA website. ViA has a procedure for recognition of formal learning results achieved in previous education and a procedure for recognition of learning results achieved through professional experience and non-formal learning. ViA uses an internal information system for study administration, where study information on each student and their study process and results is stored. The system stores also the information on the students who have dropped out. A student can get acquainted with his/her achievements in the LAIS system. The study plan is available on the ViA website lekcijas.va.lv. Upon successful completion of the study programme, a student receives a diploma that complies with the requirements specified in the regulatory enactments and includes information on the learning outcomes and the qualification awarded, as well as the context, level, content and status of the studies acquired.

1.5. Teaching staff	<p>The qualifications and competencies of the academic staff are assessed on the basis of their professional, academic and scientific achievements. The teaching staff is elected for a definite period of time – six years. Re-election takes place on the basis of academic and scientific achievements, participation in the activities for improving teaching skills, preparation of grant projects, public information, etc. ViA regularly promotes continuous education and training of its employees by supporting their participation in various local and international courses, seminars, conferences, experience exchange programmes. Professional development plans of the employees are discussed in the annual development discussions organized by ViA Rector with the participation of Vice-Rector for Academic and Scientific Affairs. The ICS study direction specifically emphasizes innovations of the study methods and the use of new technologies.</p>
1.6. Learning resources and student support	<p>ViA material and technical base and infrastructure ensure proper and adequate resources which are available to students for acquiring knowledge in each study programme.</p> <p>ViA library provides information resources necessary for academic and scientific activities, access to scientific articles and other electronic information databases by means of the ViA library portal.</p> <p>ViA e-learning environment is an interactive support environment for students providing study materials, electronic document exchange and communication with a lecturer, as well as ensures taking examinations and tests.</p> <p>ViA material and technical base consists of 20 lecture-rooms, three computer classes, RFID and virtual reality laboratory, a computer network laboratory, an electrotechnical laboratory, a media studies laboratory, as well as software in accordance with the requirements of the study programmes.</p> <p>Booking and reservation system of premises, lecture-rooms and hostel rooms provides for a possibility to follow the lecture schedule.</p> <p>Development of career education by involving graduates in ViA activities. From autumn 2019, career consultations are offered to ViA students. The consultations are also offered during the 2020.-2021.academic year.</p>
1.7. Information management	<p>ViA provides collection of the information required for managing the study programmes and other activities through ViA website, social media, and other systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences Information System (VAIS), which is connected to the Information System of Latvian Institutions of Higher Education (LAIS), which provides a possibility to collect data on all aspects of studies and use them successfully in the study process; - Record keeping system (LIS); - E-learning environment moodle.va.lv; - ViA alumni database; - Library system ALISE; - Accounting system Horizon; - Study and student loan accounting system. <p>Moodle system has been developing since 2018 providing an advanced, single environment that supports study process (study e-environment) and functions as storage of documents. Moodle environment replaces several previously used systems.</p>
1.8. Public information	<p>ViA regularly publishes up-to-date, neutral and impartial information regarding programmes and degrees/qualifications on ViA website and social media accounts, as well as by means of printed leaflets and other materials. ViA representatives participate in educational exhibitions both in Latvia and abroad.</p> <p>ViA lecturers and employees are actively involved in public opinion formation in the region and Latvia, participating in conferences, seminars, public lectures, working in NGOs, publishing scientific publications.</p>

1.9. Programme monitoring and regular review

The Faculty Council and Senate approve the annual self-assessment report of the study programme which includes: 1) SWOT analysis, 2) analysis of the changes to the number of students, 3) analysis of student performance; 4) analysis of teaching staff achievements. Internship is also supervised and feedback from internship supervisors at the industry companies is assessed. In order to assess the quality of the study programmes, students are surveyed after each study course and graduates are surveyed a year after graduation, surveys are analyzed, the results are included in the self-assessment report of the study programme and reported to the Faculty Council and Senate. Specialists of the State Examination Commission provide opinions, recommendations on the quality of Bachelor's and Master's theses. Reviews from international experts are received during the accreditation process. The advisory board of the ICS study direction has been functioning since 2018. Programmes are assessed also by ViA Convent of Advisers.

The biggest challenges are related to Standard 1.6 "Learning resources and student support", taking into account that ViA as a small institution has limited resources and thus it is not possible to have such an access to the academic databases of scientific publications that would be desirable for support of research work of both students and teaching staff. This is an issue that, unfortunately, has not been successfully dealt with during the previous accreditation period.

The ICS study direction paid particular attention to standard 1.5 – professional development of the teaching staff – during the previous accreditation period, funding was requested from Erasmus+ (e.g., Erasmus+ strategic partnership project "Simulation games in strategic communication"), as well as since 2018, ESF project "Development of Academic Staff and Human Resources of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences" (SAM 8.2.2) is being implemented providing training in the following areas: English language, digital technology, academic leadership, while internship opportunities in commercial companies contribute to closer cooperation with industry.

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

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

Funding for the study programmes of the study direction "Information and Communication Science" in 2019 amounted to 190 thousand EUR, which includes the State budget funding and ViA's own income (*see Table No. 3*).

Table No. 3. *Financial resources for the implementation of the relevant study programmes of the study direction (EUR)*

Funding	2013, EUR	2014, EUR	2015, EUR	2016, EUR	2017, EUR	2018, EUR	2019, EUR
State budget funding for the study direction (without scholarship funding)	91084	86662	86656	84862	75970	128349	152166
Own income - tuition fees for the study direction	113419	92094	72239	70299	50531	46389	37985
Total funding	204503	178756	158895	155161	126501	174738	190151

There is no breakdown of ViA funding for research activities by study directions, but it is shifted to research institutes, grant programmes, research projects and ordered assignments involving academic staff from different study directions and amounted to EUR 1.5 million in 2019 (*see Table No. 4*).

Table No.4. *Funding for research (creative) activities of the academic staff (EUR)*

Funding	2013, EUR	2014, EUR	2015, EUR	2016, EUR	2017, EUR	2018, EUR	2019, EUR
Financial reference amount to scientific institution	49065	36498	42084	13222	124321	142725	147790
Funding to the State research programmes			9453	56119	82811		325099

Funding to research grants allocated by Valmiera city local government	22012	22500	22500	20000	20000	20000	15000
Other scientific funding from the state budget (incl. Research commissioned by public administration institutions)							132586
Performance funding			19743	24514	122192	150240	181806
Other income from the State budget				97095	61046	25951	
EU Structural Funds	2208	19209			510796	534951	
Grants and programmes of the Latvian Council of Science			1500				
Income from contracts with legal entities of the Republic of Latvia		3699	4658	36200	5785	101209	86257
Other income for research activities			1900		2180		696
Income from foreign financial assistance	71834	29898	32177	20372	28756	111259	337613

Total funding	145119	111804	134015	267522	957887	1086335	1522010
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Funding for ViA library collections is not divided by study directions because during the study process the existing library resources are often used by students from several study directions (see [Table No. 5](#)). Substantial renewal of literature for each course is done on a cyclic base, while more topical units of additional literature are purchased on a regular basis.

Table No.5. *Funding for the purchase of study literature and subscription of electronic databases (EUR)*

Expenses for library collections	2013, EUR	2014, EUR	2015, EUR	2016, EUR	2017, EUR	2018, EUR	2019, EUR
Periodicals	2195	2923	2077	1930	1955	2218	1865
Books	7772	9828	4394	5873	17954	14470	10849
Electronic documents and databases	18365	19251	468	4373	2870	2789	3068
Total:	28332	32002	6939	12176	22779	19477	15782

Funding for student self-government

Funding for student self-government is provided in the amount of at least one two-hundredths of the State funding for the study process and tuition fees each year, and fluctuates around seven thousand EUR per year (see [Table No.6](#)).

Table No.6. *Funding for student self-government (EUR)*

Funding	2013, EUR	2014, EUR	2015, EUR	2016, EUR	2017, EUR	2018, EUR	2019, EUR
Funding for student self-government	8285	7413	6958	6958	7173	7470	7470
<i>State funding for the study process</i>	933962	941796	941796	966643	1138395	1236054	1276531
<i>Income from tuition fees</i>	572689	454301	435766	381154	261350	205191	179537

Total income from the study process	1506651	1396097	1377562	1347797	1399745	1441245	1456068
<i>Student self-government funding ratio, %</i>	<i>0.55</i>	<i>0.53</i>	<i>0.51</i>	<i>0.52</i>	<i>0.51</i>	<i>0.52</i>	<i>0.51</i>

Financial base is sufficient for the implementation of the study programmes, taking into account the fact that the costs for the implementation of the study programmes are covered from various financial sources: project funding, the State budget funds, ViA's own income. Recently, ViA has attracted significant funding from the EU structural funds to modernize its multimedia laboratory and renovate several lecture-rooms. Within the framework of various projects, ViA has also received funding for acquiring new items for the library collection. ICS students are offered State-funded study places, as well as students who pay tuition fee are attracted. Funding for the professional development of the teaching staff is provided by Erasmus+ programme (e.g., Erasmus+ strategic partnership project "Simulation games in strategic communication"), as well as since 2018, ESF project "Development of Academic Staff and Human Resources of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences" (SAM 8.2.2) is being implemented providing training in the following areas: English language, digital technology, academic leadership, while internship opportunities in commercial companies contribute to closer cooperation with the industry. Involvement of expert I.Zaumane and foreign professor A. Siibak in the process of preparation of the new Master's study programmes was also funded by this project. The ICS study direction is also regularly applying for a possibility to attract lecturers from the USA within the framework of the Fulbright programme. The next visit of a Fulbright professor is planned for spring 2021.

Study program cost calculation

ViA uses its own calculation methodology to calculate student costs, in which costs are classified as follows:

- Direct costs - direct costs of the study program implementation:
 - remuneration of academic staff
 - costs of teaching materials, events
 - other direct costs related to the implementation of the study program;
- Semi-direct costs - direct costs of the study field and faculty:
 - remuneration of academic staff, which is not directly related to the implementation of a study program (eg, remuneration of faculty lecturers for scientific work),
 - direction and faculty administrative work costs (remuneration of the dean, head of the direction, senior specialist),
 - other administrative expenses of the direction and the faculty (expenses for business trips of the faculty, training, attendance at conferences, membership fees in organizations, stationery, hospitality and other expenses),
 - development expenses (use of funding directly earmarked for the development of the faculty or field),
 - cost carrier - the number of students at the faculty (for the transfer of direct costs of the faculty) or the number of students in the direction (for the transfer of direct costs of the direction);
- Indirect costs - other costs of the university:
 - remuneration (remuneration of administrative, general and economic staff),

- administrative costs (business trip expenses, total study process organization expenses, technology expenses, library expenses, marketing, public relations and event organization expenses, other administrative expenses),
- building management costs (infrastructure maintenance and operating costs),
- loan repayment expenses;
- capital expenditure (books, equipment),
- cost carrier - the number of students in the program (for the transfer of remuneration, administrative and capital costs) or the number of contact hours of the study courses implemented within the study program per year (for the transfer of building management costs).

The information on costs per student indicates the items included in the cost calculation and the percentage distribution of funding between the specified items (see Table No.6.1).

Table No.6.1. Percentage distribution of funding for costs per student (EUR)

Cost items	CPR	MSJ	MIL
	<i>Bak</i>	<i>Bak</i>	<i>Mg</i>
	%	%	%
Direct costs			
Academic and scientific work costs (study process)	30.2	35.7	40.8
Other costs of the study process	0.2	0.1	0
Semi-direct costs (direction, transfer of faculty direct costs)			
Remuneration for scientific activity (academic open + scientific activity)	4.7	4.3	3.9
Administrative work	8.5	7.7	7.1
Other administrative expenses	2	1.9	1.7
Total direct costs (direct + semi-direct)	45.6	49.7	53.5

Indirect costs (transfer of other ViA costs)	54.4	50.3	46.5
Remuneration	33.5	30.5	27.9
Other administrative expenses	10.8	9.8	9
Loan repayment (incl. Interest payments)	1.9	1.7	1.6
Capital expenditure	1.1	1	1
Building management costs	7.1	7.3	7
Cost per 1 student	100	100	100

The calculation of the costs of the study program SCG is currently not analyzed, because the first students in this study program were admitted only in September 2020.

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

ViA has two buildings in Valmiera, at Cēsu Street 4 and Tērbatas Street 10 for the study process, scientific, research and administrative activities, with the total area of 71312 m², of which 2387 m² are used directly for the study and research process. The infrastructure is not that big to be specifically allocated to one study direction, all the resources in a harmonized manner are planned for all study directions. The current study base consists of 38 lecture-rooms (total area of 1445 m²), incl., 3 computer classrooms with 90 workstations and the Internet connection (195 m²) and 12 laboratories of which the Multimedia Laboratory and TV studio are the most essential for the ICS study direction. All computers are connected to the common network ensuring a unified circulation of information, as well as there is an access to the Internet and databases. A conference room (257 m²) is also used in the study process. There are also rooms for group work and individual studies (350 m²) in the study blocks.

Taking into account that Master's classes are held on Fridays and Saturdays, Master's students are offered a possibility to book a room in ViA hostels in advance through the electronic system.

All lecture-rooms are equipped with a stationary computer, a projector, and loudspeakers; one

lecture-room is equipped with a remote control for presentations, a timer and a laser pointer. All computers have an access to the Internet and full-text databases subscribed. Students can also use full-text databases in the hostel and, upon signing in, from any place with the Internet access. Wireless Internet access is available for students in all lecture-rooms.

The number of available computers:

- For students – 160 pcs.
- For academic staff – 45 pcs.
- For administrative staff – 60 pcs.

The number of stationary computers in the lecture-rooms – 30 (excluding computer classrooms)

Portable computers – 60 pcs.

Multimedia projectors – 45 pcs.

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

ViA methodological base ensures availability of resources to students for the acquisition of knowledge and is appropriate and suitable for each study programme. Students have access to ViA e-learning environment, which is interactive student support environment providing study materials, electronic document exchange and communication with a lecturer, and which can be used for taking and assessing tests. In autumn 2017, ViA started a gradual transition to the Moodle learning environment for the purpose of the study process, as well as a license to use the WebEX study platform was acquired offering far wider possibilities for the implementation of distance learning forms and development of a so-called combined learning approach. In the Moodle environment, methodological and other materials related to the study process (e.g., regulations on the development of study papers, regulations of internship, methodological guidelines for the development of study papers, etc.) are also available in English, taking into account the fact that it is planned to implement the study programme also in English. To enable ViA teaching staff to take full advantage of the new technological opportunities, ViA since 2018 has been implementing the ESF project “Development of Academic Staff and Human Resources of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences” (No.8.2.2.0/18/A/012) training the staff to use various technological tools in the study process. Besides, video equipment, for example, for recording lectures is purchased, there is support available for teaching staff to record and edit video lectures. This is a direction that needs to be further developed within the framework of ViA, taking into account the rapid development of technologies. Students have also access to a booking and reservation system of premises, lecture-rooms and hostel rooms, which provides for a possibility to follow the lecture schedule remotely, as well as to announce changes promptly. There is an electronic system for booking computer and

multimedia equipment set up which provides students with a possibility to use ViA equipment (photo and video cameras, dictophones, etc.) for creating multimedia content. Students can also book some time in the multimedia laboratory. In 2020, ViA has finished the development of a mobile application that provides access to the most important electronic resources: moodle environment, lecture schedule, e-mail, etc.

Library resources

The library is open to readers 51 hours per week. ViA students and lecturers have remote access to databases and electronic catalogue 24/7. The library is also accessible for people with physical disabilities. The library provides all the traditional library services. Information about resources and services available at the library can be found on Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences website under the section library <https://va.lv/en/students-and-employees/library/about-library> For bachelor's students, the library's working hours are fully suitable, but relatively less access to library resources is for master's students who visit ViA on Friday afternoons and Saturdays. Master students can pre-order books, it is possible to pre-order copies from the necessary book chapters, etc. Lecturers also tend to prepare a set of course literature in digital form within the study courses.

On the 1st floor reading room (455.10m²) students have access to 130 units of periodicals in Latvian, Russian, English and German of which 35 units are subscribed by ViA library. Fiction and archive of selected periodicals are also available. On the 2nd floor, there is a computerized reading room (67.80 m²) with 18 work stations, 4 more work stations are in the main room. The computers have also PSPP data processing programme. Furthermore, there are two reading rooms (14.50 m² each) for group work, four individual reading rooms (5.20 m² each) and a quiet reading room (79.20 m²) on the second floor. The area of the second floor library is 776.00 m². There one can find specialised literature, a collection of local history of Valmiera city and surrounding municipalities, as well as the European Commission information centre Europe Direct that provides information on the European Union, as well as the archive of the best scientific papers by ViA students.

All processes of ViA library are automated by means of the library information system ALISE. Since January 2006, there is an i-library available providing for a possibility to order books from the electronic catalogue of Valmiera Integrated Library, to reserve books already lent, to extend the lending period for books, to view data on the books lent/not returned on time/booked. Since spring 2015, the mobile version of the library information system ALISE is available. Thus, the electronic catalogue is also easily accessible from the mobile devices.

To provide high quality support to VIA education and scientific process, ViA library offers individual consultations, excursions and group training to students, academic staff and other interested parties. Educational activities are organized by the specialists of both ViA Library and Valmiera Library. The goal of training is to introduce new students to Valmiera Integrated Library, services offered, to show how to work with the library's electronic catalogue and subscribed online full-text electronic databases. It is possible to apply for a training session also electronically. In the academic year 2017/2018, the first year students had 15 introductory lectures on the library and its services, students got acquainted with the electronic catalogues and information search in the databases available in Valmiera Integrated Library and remotely accessible resources of the National Library of Latvia. The library offers interlibrary loan service (ILS) free of charge as it is provided in cooperation with Valmiera Library.

The total number of ViA Library documents (physical units) was 29047 units in **August 2020**. Its distribution is shown in [Table No. 7](#).

Table No.7. *The total number of ViA Library documents (physical units).*

Type of material	Quantity
Books	21772
Electronic documents	352
Audiovisual documents	475
Cartographic documents	99
Serial publications	3500
Unpublished documents	2849

Available databases

Full-text databases: EBSCO, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Web of Science, Travelnews.lv, Lursoft, i-finanses and i-law are also available. In collaboration with Valmiera Library, the following databases are available to readers: Britannica Online Library Edition, EBSCO eBook Public Library Collection, LETA Archive, nozare.lv, Letonika, "Lursoft" newspaper archive, as well as a collection of DVDs. Mostly databases are available in all computers operating in ViA data transmission network. Individual databases may be accessed only on-site with a special permission (Lursoft, i-finanses, i-law).

The library actively participates in the testing of electronic resources and full-text databases offered by the State Agency "Culture Information Systems Centre". In the academic year 2018/2019, there are seven databases.

Procedure for developing library collection

The library collection corresponds to ViA study programmes and directions, and books published in Latvia are purchased, in cooperation with Valmiera Library, in small quantities each month. The library also accepts donations from individuals and legal entities to develop library collection with missing printed materials or those having insufficient number of copies, and other documents.

Books published outside Latvia are purchased at the request of the academic staff in accordance with ViA Library book ordering and usage procedure. If it is an open access resource available on the web or in the databases subscribed by the library, a printed copy is rarely purchased. In cases where the necessary books are not available in the library, a lecturer fills in a book ordering form for developing ViA Library collection and harmonizes it with the director of the study direction. Upon receiving a request, the library checks whether the book has not been pre-ordered and conducts a price survey. The book order should be placed before the beginning of the course. The staff of the library compiles "denied" information requests, analyzes them, and advises the lecturer a possible solution (a newer book, another book, etc.). Being aware of research interests of the lecturer, the library sends information about newly published books or other resources.

Database subscription procedure

Full-text databases are subscribed in cooperation with the State agency "Culture Information Systems Centre" within the programme "Electronic Publications for Latvian Libraries", as well as in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science within the project "Academic Network". A decision to subscribe or unsubscribe a database is made in the meeting where development, academic and scientific issues are discussed, upon agreement between the directors of the study programmes and scientific institutes.

Collection digitization level

The library does not digitalize its collections; it collects students' diploma papers (Master's theses, Qualification papers) that are already in a digital form. It is possible to access papers through library's electronic catalogue under the section "ViA Student Papers". One can have access to 431 full text student papers out of 2,656 entries. A database of lecturers' publications is being compiled in the library's electronic main catalogue under the section "Publications by ViA lecturers". The database contains 269 analytical descriptions of lecturers' publications (monographs, edited and compiled books, studies, conference materials, etc.). If these materials are available on the Internet, links to their full text are provided in the descriptions.

Possibilities to renew and improve informative provision

It can be done by using funds from the planned ViA Library budget, also within the framework of various projects (SAM, ERDF), as well as in cooperation with Valmiera Library. The library also accepts donations to replace damaged, worn-out copies. During the academic year 2018/2019, books of 72 titles (165 copies) were purchased for the needs of the ICS study programmes, for a total of EUR 5,046.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

In 2020, due to the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, when universities had to switch to online studies, the ViA library provided great support to both lecturers and students by scanning the book sections needed for studies and research, providing advice on remote connecting to databases from computers outside the ViA network. In the spring of 2002, a separate section was created in the moodle system - information in crisis conditions, and it also includes tips and information on the possibilities of using the library collection in online studies. Students received positive comments about the support provided by the library.

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

ViA has developed the Regulations "On Elections to Academic and Scientific Positions at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences", which define the procedure for announcing vacancies, assessing candidates and deciding on approval for academic or scientific positions. Vacancies are advertised by announcing a competition on the official website of "Latvijas Vēstnesis", as well as by publishing information on the ViA website. The principles of openness and access to information are complied with throughout the entire recruitment process. Persons are elected for academic positions following the open competition. Scientific, pedagogical and organizational qualifications of the candidate for the position of a professor or an associate professor are assessed by the Council of Professors in accordance with the procedures specified by the Cabinet of Ministers. The scientific and pedagogical qualifications of the candidate for the position of an assistant professor, lecturer or assistant are evaluated by the Council of the study direction referring the matter to the relevant Faculty Council.

Refer to the annex for the Regulations "On Elections to Academic and Scientific Positions at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences" (see Annex 12).

3.5. Specify whether there are common procedures for ensuring the qualification of the

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

ViA has established a common procedure for ensuring the qualification and performance quality of the academic staff. Improvement of the qualification is determined by the Regulations "Job description of the teaching staff of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences". Training needs of the lecturers are discussed at the level of study directions, funding is sought within the framework of faculty and various projects; besides, opportunities are offered to the lecturers to participate in Erasmus+ mobility to improve their qualification, as well as to use other financial resources for qualification improvement visits and participation in academic and professional conferences. Since 2018, ESF project "Development of Academic Staff and Human Resources of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences" (SAM 8.2.2) is being implemented for the professional development of lecturers providing training in the following areas: English language, digital technology, academic leadership, while internship opportunities in commercial companies contribute to closer cooperation with industry. Within the framework of ViA long-term development, it is planned to elect at least one foreign lecturer and all doctoral students involved in the project to each study direction. Since 2018, the ICS study direction is implementing Erasmus+ Strategic partnership project "Simulation games in strategic communication" (SimGames), where ICS lecturers acquire social simulations as a study method, thus introducing innovations in their teaching practice.

All lecturers elected in the direction of ICS have participated in the activities of SAM 8.2.2, both in academic leadership training and, if necessary, in the improvement of language or technological skills. Four lecturers have already started or will implement the internship with entrepreneurs planned within the project.

Selection of lecturers involved in the implementation of the ICS study direction programme is based on the following criteria: field of research and research interests, competence and knowledge accumulated during academic work (preparation of study courses), competence and knowledge accumulated in the fields related to the study programme content, degree and qualification. Prerequisites for involvement in the implementation of the study programmes are either Master's or Doctor's degree, or a doctoral candidate status, postgraduate studies, as well as English language proficiency at least at B2 level, considering that some study programmes of the study direction are planned to be implemented in both Latvian and English. As for guest lecturers, the criteria are at least a Master's degree, as well as significant practical work experience in the field of communication, media, advertising or other area relevant to the study programme content, knowledge of foreign languages and experience in scientific work.

In the CSI study direction, the academic staff with a doctoral degree is directed for election to the positions of associate professors - in 2018, two associate professors were elected, but in 2020 - two more associate professors. One associate professor is expected to be elected in 2021. During the accreditation period, only the expansion of the academic staff and the attraction of new lecturers or guest lecturers took place, there was no outflow of staff, which indicates that the lecturers appreciate the work and professional growth opportunities offered by ViA.

The added value of the opportunities used can be assessed by the fact that the teaching staff in the

study direction meets the requirements for the implementation of the academic study program at the master's level in English, as well as actively participates in implementation of international projects and are involved in preparation of new project proposal with partners that are found thanks to the cooperation under Erasmus + mobility and exchange of academic staff.

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

45 lecturers have been attracted in the study direction, of which 22 have been elected and the rest have been attracted as guest lecturers. Such a composition of academic staff is related to the fact that two professional study programs are implemented in the study direction, which require the involvement of industry professionals. The elected lecturers in a number of study courses cooperate with the professionals of the field and teach the course together in order to achieve a better quality and complementarity between the theoretical knowledge of the field and professional experience. Taking into account that since 2018 the implementation of academic master's study programs has been started, new lecturers are purposefully attracted with doctoral degrees in fields corresponding to study programs, for example, in 2020 doctor of political sciences, docent Ieva Bērziņa, lecturer of visual communication, Dr.Cand. Ilze Loža .

Providing an analysis of the analysis of the research and academic workload of elected lecturers, the aggregated data for 2020 show that the total amount of full-time equivalent (FTE) for the work of elected lecturers in research work is 7.48. This is a high indicator and confirms the intensity of the research activity implemented in the study direction. In general, the involvement of lecturers in research is changing over years, as it depends on the amount of attracted project funding, taking into account that research work in Latvia takes place only on a project basis. The academic workload for lecturers with a doctoral degree has increased during the last two years, taking into account that the implementation of two new master's degree programs has been started in the study direction. We are working on re-planning the workload of lecturers and purposeful attraction of new teaching staff in order to avoid overloading and burnout of elected lecturers, which has been previously assessed as a very big problem in Latvian higher education. The ViA remuneration system ensures that the work of lecturers is generally well remunerated, the remuneration system is transparent and has previously been assessed by the World Bank as one of the best in Latvia. As the involvement in projects increases, in order to compensate the lecturers for the time spent preparing new project applications, from 2018 the payment is made from the basic funding of the HESPI Institute. In this way, we can avoid the situation that lecturers are engaged in the preparation of project applications on voluntary basis.

Erasmus+ is the most important source of funding for a long-term support of lecturer mobility. Since 2013, ViA academic staff has implemented more than 160 mobility projects in 45 countries, a large part of them was teaching mobility. Since 2017, ViA has been actively cooperating and attracting funding for the organization of mobility outside the European Union. Within the framework of Erasmus+, ICS lecturers established cooperation and participated in teaching and staff development mobility projects in Georgia and Ukraine, while in 2020 it is planned to build cooperation with Armenia. Mobility within the framework of Erasmus+ is regulated by the internal

regulations "Procedure for organizing teaching visits at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences". ViA teaching staff, in general, has no significant hindrances to participation in Erasmus+ mobility, funding is sufficient, linguistic skills are adequate, and ViA international cooperation specialists provide assistance in planning and organizing visits, if necessary.

Every year ICS academic staff have implemented two to eight mobility visits. Their number has been highly dependent on the time resources that staff members can devote to mobility. In recent years, there is a tendency that lecturers have difficulties to free up time for mobility, because the teaching load is increasing, as the implementation of two new study programs has started, as well as the workload in scientific work, which requires time to collect data, analyze and prepare publications. The overall strategy of ViA is to aim for high-level publications that reduces the energy and time lecturers can devote to attending conferences. The prospects for mobility in the near future are very uncertain given the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lecturer mobility is funded also by other financial sources – Nordplus and various international projects. Since 2018, funding of SAM8.2.1 is also available for lecturers who participate in the elaboration of the study programmes to be developed within the project.

Every year, foreign lecturers who come with funding from various scholarships (Erasmus +, Fulbright) as well as within the framework of joint cooperation projects are admitted to the study field of IKZ. For the last two academic years (2018/2019 and 2019/2020), ViA is taught by a visiting professor from the University of Tartu, Andris Siibak, with whom he has also collaborated within the framework of the Baltic International Summer Schools. Two lecturers came to Ukraine from the Mohil Academy School of Journalism and within the framework of ViA International Week. In 2016 and 2019, Professor Oyvind Okland from NLA University College Gimlekollen visited the field of study as a guest lecturer. In the spring of 2021, a semester-long visit of a US visiting professor with funding from the Fulbright program is planned. Fulbright's funding in 2018 was used by a film director and lecturer at the California College of the Arts, Helen De Michiel, who taught documentary storytelling to both IKZ students and faculty. A media and journalism professor Barbara Burke was a visiting professor at ICS study direction in the academic year 2016/2017 with a Fulbright scholarship, and a fruitful cooperation with her has been continued afterwards: a joint online study course "Mass Communication" to students at ViA and the Minnesota Morris University. With B.Burke, IKZ lecturer Liene Ločmele has implemented several research projects and participated at several academic conferences.

Information on the workload methodology for academic staff is available in ViA Salary Regulations.

Refer to the annex for teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study direction (see Annex 13).

Refer to the annex for the biographies of the academic staff (Europass CV format) (see Annex 14).

Refer to the annex for the statistics of incoming and outgoing mobility of ViA academic staff (see Annex 15).

Refer to the annex for ViA Salary Regulations (see Annex 16) (Latvian only),

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

During the study process, support for students is provided by the directors of the study directions, study methodologists, employees of the Administrative Department, for more details refer **to sections 1.3 of Part I and section 1.6. of Part II**. As for career guidance, from the autumn semester of 2019, ViA offers a new service – career consultations and career planning guidance. The specialist provides also psychological support. Especially important this has proved to be for first year students who make the transition from high school to university and often go through the experience of moving away from their families. This service is offered to students of all study programmes, not singling out international students, taking into account the fact that currently there is a few international students at ViA. Part-time studies or distance learning are not implemented in the ICS study direction. Support for students with special needs is planned depending on the specific health situation and needs of each student. If necessary, a possibility to study according to the individual plan is offered. Those interested in taking ViA courses but who can not participate in full-time studies can take advantage of the Open University opportunities. Labour market employees are willing to take this opportunity.

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

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

ViA acquired the status of a scientific institution in 2015, since then, the number of staff elected to scientific positions has increased from seven to 25, while funding for research projects has increased five times over this period. According to journalistic analysis (magazine IR, <https://ir.lv/>). ViA is leading institution in Latvia in terms of the amount of EUR attracted per researcher. ViA scientific activities are planned according to the “mission” principle, defining issues of importance to society that cannot be solved within a single scientific discipline. In this way, ViA research activities promote interdisciplinarity. ViA is strategically focused on attracting new talents within the post-doctoral programme, and lecturers elected to the ICS study direction are also motivated to apply for this programme. In 2018, ViA employs six post-doctoral researchers, including foreign researchers. In 2020, in ICS study direction, one post-doctoral researcher has started her work.

Since 2018, ViA has been also implementing the project “Support for Effective Involvement of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences in International Scientific Circulation (ViA-Int)”, which aims to encourage ViA research staff to engage in international research projects, thus strengthening the capacity of researchers to develop international projects, promoting development of a number of international contacts and networking possibilities of researchers, and developing research work in ViA research sub-areas. It is expected that as a result of the project ViA will contribute to the preparation of at least seven ERDF-supported and above the quality threshold assessed project applications of Horizon 2020 and the European Union’s 9th Framework Programme. Since the beginning of 2019, within the framework of the project, lecturers from the ICS study direction have

been working on a new joint project application within the strategic communication area with the Royal College in London, the Munich Defence Academy in Germany and other partners abroad. It is planned to submit the application in 2020.

Research activities within the ICS study direction are mostly organized through ViA HESPI institute (refer to 4.4. for more detailed description). Most of the lecturers involved in the ICS study programmes are teamed up in the research sub-direction "Communication Ecosystem and Technologies" (CET). The development of this research sub-direction is closely related to the activities of ICS in accordance with ViA strategic goals as defined in ViA "Strategy for 2016-2020". Research activities comply most of all with the Education priority: to provide up-to-date and high quality education offer based on research that corresponds with the labour market demand and forecasts, and good international practice. During the current period of accreditation scientific research is performed within the study direction thanks to teaching staff's efforts to attract research grants and funding of various other projects, as well as within the framework of lecturers' doctoral studies (A. Dāvidsone - University of Tartu, Estonia, L.Ločmele - University of Massachusetts, USA, V.Silkāne - University of Latvia, A.Broka - Tallinn University, Estonia). For example, at the end of 2018, CET research sub-direction has attracted funding of the State Research Programme for a three-year project "Values in Action: Developing Responsible, Safe and Educated Civil Society through Research and Development of Behaviour Models" involving researchers with the Doctor's degrees, as well as four ViA postgraduate students and several ViA lecturers who have started or are continuing their doctoral studies. From 2017 to 2019 CET sub-direction researchers implemented the project supported by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund "Media Involvement in the Integration of the Third-Country Nationals in Latvia", during which, at the invitation of the Ministry of Culture and in collaboration with Riga Stradiņš University researchers, recommendations for the development of a unified code of media ethics in Latvia, as well as a template for media editorial guidelines were developed. In 2019, an application for the second round of PMIF projects was submitted together with RSU, funding was obtained, but unfortunately the project had to be closed in autumn 2020 due to problems with COVID-19, as it was not possible to implement all the planned activities. In 2019 and 2020, ICS researchers also implemented two targeted studies funded by Valmiera City Municipality in relation to the forthcoming administrative-territorial reform. In 2020, ViA participated in the RSU-led National Research Program project "Life with Covid-19: Assessment of Coronavirus Crisis Management in Latvia and Proposals for Future Society Sustainability (COVID Life)".

Cooperation with RSU takes place during the preparation of applications for project tenders organized by the Latvian Council of Science. RSU lecturers have been members of the final examination commissions of the ICS study direction for many years, there is also a lecturer exchange for teaching certain courses. In June 2018, ICS lecturers and lecturers of RSU Faculty of Social Sciences jointly organized a panel within the framework of AABS International Scientific Conference at Stanford University in the USA.

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

Scientific activities and preparation of publications for academic and popular science editions are related to the content, goals and tasks of the study programmes, including research projects jointly carried out by lecturers and students within the framework of Bachelor's and Master's theses in

fields such as communication and media development, strategic communication, research of modern persuasive communication techniques and analysis of influencing messages, as well as research related to online relationships between individuals, research studies on topics such as the use of history in contemporary strategic communication, media literacy, information literacy, audience research, research of socio- cognitive process and individual behaviour, research of the online environment and related socio-psychological aspects, the role of culture in communication, research of communication ethics, and since 2020- also different studies related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results of the various projects listed in section 4.1. are integrated into lectures at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, and publications written within the framework of the lecturers' projects are included in the list of compulsory or additional literature. By attending and speaking at local and international scientific conferences on a regular basis, lecturers keep abreast of the latest developments in the field and of current research trends. In this way, the content of the study courses is improved ensuring that the study courses are based on the latest scientific findings and research results.

Since 2018, lecturers of the ICS direction have been implementing Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project "Simulation Games in Strategic Communication" (SimGames). Within the project, several social simulation scenarios are being developed and tested with MIL and SCG students. It is envisaged that social simulations as a study method will be used more widely as a result of the project, and the lecturers, within the framework of the project, will prepare both a manual and video tutorials on the creation and use of simulations in the study process, and they will be publicly available to anyone interested individual.

Video and other modern formats are increasingly used to communicate lecturers' scientific work, enriching the base of study materials, for example, a collection "Economic History of Latvia" written by a group of authors was published in 2017 (scientific editor - ICS lecturer Dr.hist G.Krūmiņš). The collection is complemented by short, concise videos on the topics covered. Since 2018, ViA has implemented several Media Support Fund projects with the Latvian Regional Television "ReTV", where ICS lecturers participated in discussion programmes and talked about their research on various topics related to media literacy, public securitability, strategic communication and other communication issues. The broadcast recordings are used in the study process according to the subjects of the study courses. In anticipation of the centenary of the Latvian state, the Latvian National Encyclopaedia (2018) was published, and ICS lecturers G. Krūmiņš and J. Buholcs participated in the preparation of several entries. In order to promote the wider use of scientific knowledge in the study process, in 2020 the establishment of ViA multimedia studio was completed, where it is possible to both record lectures and manage the online study process using a light board.

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

In November 2019, ViA is the host organization for the annual Nordic Intercultural Communication Network Conference, thanks to the long-term work of ICS lecturers on the board of this network and

regular participation in the network's previous conferences presenting there their reports. The theme of the conference is "How to live in cultural diversity? Building sustainable communities in times of fear". Several ICS lecturers will participate in the conference presenting there their reports. The conference will bring together researchers from more than 10 countries.

In 2019, lecturers of the ICS started the project "Media and Communication in Education and Science" together with the reserachers from the Rzeszów University of Information Technology and Management in Poland to study the application of ICT in education, including the use of virtual and augmented reality solutions. The progress of the project has been severely delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the renewed activity is expected in 2021.

Since 2018, lecturers of the ICS study direction have been implementing Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project "Simulation Games in Strategic Communication" (SimGames), which involves both research and jointly developed practical results - several social simulation scenarios. The project involves lecturers from Vilnius (Lithuania) and Tartu (Estonia), while Royal College in London is involved as an associate partner. Simulation scenarios are tested with MIL and SCG students within the project obtaining student feedback to improve scenarios and integrate social simulations into the study programmes as a regular study method.

Between 2016 and 2018, three ICS lecturers were involved in the project NECME "New forms of European citizenship in migration era" funded under the Europe for Citizens programme, within the framework of the project research on perception of migration was conducted by project partners from 15 countries. ViA representatives analyzed the data obtained and participated in the elaboration of the final report, as well as organized a project partner meeting.

From 2012 to 2014, ICS lecturers participated in Interreg 4C project "Baltic Metropolises for Promoting Branding and Identity in the Baltic Sea Region / ONE BSR" with the partners from the Baltic Sea Region countries. Within the framework of the project, research of the Baltic Sea Region brand was conducted, and ViA representatives presented a part of research results. The project employed a group of ICS undergraduate students who conducted research and collected data within the study courses.

ICS lecturers have developed several international intensive programmes using results of their research: in 2012, ViA hosted Erasmus Intensive Programme "From Local to Global", while in 2017 and 2018 ViA hosted the Baltic International Summer School "Media Literacy and Democracy", both of them involved an international team of lecturers and also students from different countries. In 2018, the Summer School was attended by lecturers and students from the University of Minnesota - Morris, and it is planned to host the next Summer School in 2021 together with this university.

In general, international cooperation in research is one of the directions that should be further developed because at the present moment there is a good level in the area of studies and academic work achieved (ICS lecturers regularly teach abroad, each year international lecturers from foreign universities are attracted), while the intensity of cooperation could be higher in the area of science. In the end of 2019, the development of ViA Research Strategy for the next 10 years was started, and one of the priorities to be achieved is the development of international cooperation in science. This can be done by pinpointing and communicating with potential partners ViA "niches" in the area of science, as well as by activating a network of partners, working purposefully on fundraising, changing the focus from competing for the State funding to the European Commission's and other financial sources.

4.4. Specify the way how the higher education institution/ college promotes the

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

Research activities within the ICS study direction are organized through ViA HESPI institute, where several lecturers are elected: associate professor G.Krūmiņš, associate professor J.Buholcs, assistant professor A.Dāvidsone, assistant professor V.Silkāne, assistant professor L.Veliverronena, lecturer L.Ločmele, guest lecturer A.Broka, etc. Thanks to the active involvement of ViA CET researchers in the field of research regarding Russian disinformation, ViA ICS study direction since 2018 has been participating several times in the annual conference “Riga StratCom Dialogue” held by NATO Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence based in Riga, and ViA had a booth there for two years. HESPI has also attracted funding from several projects funded by Valmiera City Municipal Grant Programme, for example, a study on patient satisfaction with communication with medical staff at Valmiera Hospital. Since 2018, financial reference amount to HESPI has been gradually increasing, which is an additional possibility to pay for the scientific work of the lecturers. Unlike other higher education institutions in Latvia, ICS lecturers are paid from the HESPI annual grant for hours dedicated to the preparation of new scientific project applications (in 2019 and 2020 the budget was 15,000 EUR per year). ViA basic budget also provides funding for publication costs if the preparation of publications is not already funded by a project. The director of the study direction is actively working to attract new researchers, including doctoral students, to develop new initiatives – for example, in autumn of 2019, a Dr.Cand of visual communication and design of the Art Academy of Latvia Ilze Loža started working as a guest lecturer and was elected as lecturer in Spring, 2020.

In total, the academic staff members involved in the field of IKZ studies have published more than 120 scientific publications in the past accreditation period.

Participation in conferences in the study direction takes place using the budget of scientific projects and then participation is related to the fulfillment of the project deliverables. If conference attendance takes place outside scientific projects, these costs can be covered by the Erasmus + program. Since ViA is implementing the project “Support for the effective involvement of Vidzeme University College in the international scientific community (ViA-Int)” (2018-2022), the costs of attending conferences can also be covered from the funds of this project. However, it should be emphasized that the central priority of ViA is the preparation of high-level publications for academic journals, therefore no specific goals outside the research projects regarding the attendance of conferences for ViA lecturers are set.

A significant number of ICS lecturers have obtained a doctoral degree in the fields relevant to the study direction during the previous accreditation period. A number of lecturers have used ViA academic leave opportunities to work on their doctoral theses. The themes of the doctoral theses reflect extensive expertise of the lecturers in the research field of communication science. The topic of thesis and the year of defence are given in the [table No.8](#) below. The table also contains information on the topics of doctoral theses of the lecturers involved in the implementation of the study direction programmes.

Table No. 8. Topics of theses defended by the lecturers involved in the ICS study direction in the previous accreditation period.

Lecturer name	Scientific degree and academic position	Topic of the doctoral thesis	Year of defence
Solvita Denisa Liepniece	Dr.sc.comm, assistant professor	Political communication in post-Soviet Belarus: the metaphorical messages 49 fan authoritarian leader, Aleksander Lukashenka	2013
Jānis Buholcs	Dr.sc.comm., associate professor	Relationships between individuals in online social networks	2013
Renāte Cāne	Dr.sc.comm, assistant professor	Transformation of communicative functions of Latvian documentary cinema (1944-1990)	2014
Linda Veliverronena	PhD, assistant professor	Conceptualizing Engagement Modes: Understanding Museum-Audience Relationships in Latvian Museums	2016
Agnese Dāvidsone	PhD, assistant professor	Teacher Professional Agency in Relation to Digital Technology Integration in Teaching in Estonian and Latvian Schools	2017
Vineta Silkāne	Dr.psych, Mg.math., assistant professor	Relationship between procrastination, discounting and personality traits in health behaviour	2018
Anžela Jurāne - Brēmane	Dr.paed., assistant professor	Formative assessment in the study process	2018
Liene Ločmele	Doctoral candidate, lecturer	Construction of Latvian Identity in the Economic Emigration Discourse	<i>Expected - 2020</i>
Jānis Kapustāns	Doctoral student, lecturer	Factors of cooperation and competition in the foreign policy of the three Baltic States from 1991 to nowadays	<i>Expected - 2022</i>

Apart from the indexed publications, it is necessary to highlight another aspect of research: ViA Media Literacy Initiative research activities resulted in diverse content - from scientific articles in three languages to popular science publications in various media, documentary, radio interviews, media criticism and comment/opinion articles on cases of disinformation, manipulation with media content, etc. Most of these publications have appeared in social media www.lsm.lv and the news portal Delfi.lv. Journalists of the programme "Nekā personīga" ("Nothing personal") and others made their TV spots on the basis of these publications. For example, associate professors J.Buholcs and G.Krūmiņš created a series of articles from 2017 to 2018 refuting the Kremlin-held myth of Soviet generous investments in the Baltic States during the occupation. Detailed and in-depth analysis on topics such as the (seemingly) dangerous online game Blue Whale, as well as disinformation about NATO soldiers' allegedly left waste in the Latvian forests were published by associate professors J.Buholcs and S.Denisa-Liepniece. S.Denisa-Liepniece is also the author of the

tale on media literacy “*Caps un ciet. Vilks manipulators*” (Gotcha. Wolf, the Manipulator), published in the beginning of 2019 with support from the Ministry of Culture and ViA. All of the materials produced within the framework of the Media Literacy Initiative are available at this link <http://va.lv/lv/zinatne/mediju-iniciativa/mediju-pratiba-raksti>. With regard to these materials, it should be emphasized that this is not a kind of scientific activity and a publication in such a form that give researchers high ratings and citation, however, it is a very important activity which is essential for raising the level of public awareness.

Lecturers of the ICS study direction actively participated also in organizing and improving pupil research activities. In 2017 and 2019, assistant professor V.Silkāne participated in the expert group, which developed guidelines for pupil research papers and assessment criteria. Every year ICS lecturers conduct a number of training seminars for writing research papers at schools.

Within ViA, ICS lecturers facilitate also a circulation of information and quality assurance of scientific work, for example, by informing colleagues on experience gained in conferences regarding issues such as research ethics, as well as in autumn of 2019 lecturers of the study direction organized seminars on topics “The place and role of science in the next phase of ViA strategy”, “Scientific tendencies in the world and the strength of scientific evidence”.

Refer to the annex for the list of scientific publications of the elected research staff involved in the implementation of study programmes of the ICS study direction in 2013-2019 (see Annex 17).

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

A significant role in the organization of ViA research work is given to the involvement of students in scientific research. Lecturers and students of the Master’s programmes collaborate in the project “Values in action: promotion of responsible, secure and educated civil society in Latvia through research and behaviour model development” of the State Research Programme which is implemented from 2018 to 2021. The total student workload in this project is three full time equivalents each year.

Students are also involved in the preparation of scientific publications – in 2019, an undergraduate student in cooperation with associate professor A. Dāvidsone prepared a publication for the conference collection (Dāvidsone, A., Galvanovska, D. (2019) Exploring the factors influencing ethical considerations in reporting on migration issues in Latvian news media. International Scientific Conference “SOCIETY, INTEGRATION, EDUCATION – SIE2019”, Rēzekne, May 24-25, 2019) within the project “Involvement of Mass Media in the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in Latvia” of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

Assistant professor V.Silkāne together with students published two publications:

- Petrova, E., Jansone, D., & Silkāne, V. (2014). The development and assessment of competencies in Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 140, 241-245.
- Silkāne, V., Pūdža, E. (2013). The role of science communication in collaboration between scientists and entrepreneurs in Latvia. International conference “Entrepreneurship and

Innovation as Key Drivers of Regional Development”, July 15-16, 2013, Ventspils, Latvia, 231-238.

Students have been involved also in the activities of the media literacy initiative – summarization, analysis of information for publications and popular science articles. In 2020, students from the bachelor programs participate in the implementation of a targeted study of Valmiera City Municipality.

In the spring of 2020, in response to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ViA management team temporarily reduced its salaries and directed the funds to the development of a student project grant program to promote student employment in times of crisis. For this funding, students created various multimedia materials, which was used in ViA's marketing and communication.

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

During the reporting period, the main focus of the ICS study direction was on pedagogical innovation. Since 2018, lecturers of the ICS study direction have been implementing Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project “Simulation Games in Strategic Communication” (SimGames) which involves both research and jointly developed practical results – several social simulation scenarios. Within the project, simulation scenarios are tested with the MIL and SCG students, and student feedback is obtained to improve scenarios and integrate social simulations into the study programmes as a regular study method.

Pedagogical innovation is also one of the topics of the ESF project “Development of Academic Staff and Human Resources of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences” (SAM 8.2.2) which has been implemented since 2018, within the framework of the project lecturers visit lectures of their colleagues, discuss the things observed and the possibilities of professional development. Within this project, a new form of cooperation with the industry companies is tested – lecturer traineeship opportunities at the business companies are organized, which facilitate the development of closer cooperation with the industry.

The second block of innovations is technological innovations, investments in expanding ICT opportunities. Since the autumn of 2020, lecturers also have access to a modern multimedia studio, where it is possible to both record lectures and conduct online studios using a whiteboard. There is also one auditorium created, where it is possible to organize small group work, project-based study process. These improvements have been made in the project "Next Generation Micro Cities of Europe" in cooperation with VALmiera Municipality, Ventspils University College and other partners.

The impact of innovations on the study process can be assessed as high - lecturers have modernized their study methods, pedagogical improvement has taken place, as a result of which lecturers have expanded their range of pedagogical methods, links established with companies within the internship program. The lecturers have used the multimedia studio and the equipment available in it to record their lessons in video format, to prepare explanatory videos. During the COVID-19 pandemic, several lecturers have also implemented online classes using the TV studio and the equipment available in it.

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

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

ICS lecturers have developed good cooperation with the administration of Vidzeme Planning Region, information is exchanged, involvement in research is ensured and internship is provided on a regular basis. Good cooperation is established with several municipalities in Vidzeme, where students conducted research on issues important for local governments and completed their internship. In general, several local newspapers in Vidzeme, as well as newspapers in other regions of Latvia, monthly and weekly magazines "IR" and "Santa" group magazines provide regular media internship possibilities. In the sector of TV and radio, cooperation within the framework of internship is with such media as Vidzeme TV, Latvian regional television Re:TV, Radio TEV, Radio Skonto Valmiera Studio, the "Latvian Television" news service, the "Latvian Radio" news service, and radio channel pieci.lv, "TV3", "LNT", "Radio SWH", in the digital media group: news agency LETA, www.pilseta24.lv, www.delfi.lv, etc. In the field of communication, students have regular internship opportunities with the long-term partner organizations, including PR agencies "PR Stils", "Hill & Knowlton", "Repute", "Hauska & Partners", BPS, State Chancellery Communication Department, Press and Public Relations Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, Valmiera City local government, Cēsis Municipality local government, and other local governments and their subordinate institutions, Corporate Communication Department and Public Relations Department of LLC Lattelekom, Corporate Communication Department and Marketing and Public Relations Department of SJSC Latvenergo, etc. Since autumn 2016, active cooperation in the ICS study direction has been started with the Baltic Media Centre of Excellence, NATO Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence in Riga, the Ministry of Culture and a number of other organizations and well-known Latvian communication experts. Collaboration is aimed at developing strategic communication study programmes at the Master's level, while strengthening its inclusion in the undergraduate courses.

The ICS study direction has developed good cooperation with professional associations of the field. For example, representatives of the Latvian Association of Journalists (Anda Rožukalne, Kārlis Dagilis etc.) are involved in the study process as guest lecturers or members of the State Examination Commission. Associate professor Jānis Buholcs, elected to the study direction, is a member of the Ethics Committee of the Latvian Association of Journalists. Students of the MSJ programme have an opportunity to attend events for the young journalists organized by the association. Lecturers of the CPR and SCG programmes are involved in various events of the field such as work assessment for the annual Latvian PR prize organized by the Latvian Communication Association (LAKA) and the Latvian Association for Public Relations Professionals (LASAP). Another important form of cooperation is guest lectures taught by professionals within the study courses.

Students also have an opportunity to participate in events organized by the association.

The director of the study direction A.Dāvidsone participates in media policy work-groups set up by the Ministry of Culture, J.Buholcs and S.Denisa Liepniece, elected lecturers to the study direction, participate in the projects of the Baltic Centre of Media Excellence. In total, ViA has entered into more than 40 internship umbrella agreements with governmental, non-governmental organizations and business enterprises throughout Latvia.

Study Advisory Councils have been established in the ICS study direction – one in the field of media, the other in the field of communication and public relations. Industry professionals are involved in both councils.

Within the framework of the Project SAM 8.2.2., the academic staff members of the study field carry out internships in various media and communication companies.

The main criteria for establishing cooperation result from the thematic orientation of the study programmes, interest in cooperation in the academic and scientific field to increase the quality of studies through cooperation with the industry (taking into consideration the fact that professional programmes are implemented at the undergraduate level), to establish a stable network of internship, to promote student employment after graduation. Employers are attracted through ViA Convention of Counsellors, Advisory Councils established in the study direction, as well as through involvement of professionals in teaching guest lectures, State examination commissions, internship, etc.

The ICS study direction has always actively cooperated with various domestic and international partners since its establishment, and cooperation has been further developed since 2016, when the management of ViA and the management of the ICS study direction have conducted extensive consulting and networking during the development process of both new Master's programmes (MIL and SCG). During this time contacts were strengthened with the NATO Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence in Riga, the State Chancellery, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Culture and the King's College in London. As the study programmes were developed, suggestions and ideas of the various partners regarding the content of the new programmes were taken into consideration. The strategic goal of attracting international students and the target countries – Georgia and Ukraine – were also defined. To attract partners, ViA visited several times Kiev-Mohila Academy in Ukraine, and established partnerships with universities in Tbilisi, Georgia, such as the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA), Tbilisi State University. These universities have expressed an interest in developing dual degree programmes in strategic communication with ViA at the Master's level, and on the basis of such a programme to start negotiations also regarding a joint doctoral programme in communication science in the future. To implement the study programme and promote international contacts, as well as to attract students, partnerships are also being developed in Europe – in Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden, Great Britain, Poland, Portugal, etc. Since the academic year of 2018/2019, within the framework of the project SAM 8.2.1., Andra Siibak, a visiting professor from the University of Tartu, Estonia, has joined ViA.

In general, ViA provides various opportunities for cooperation abroad: student and staff mobility within the framework of Erasmus, inter-university cooperation within the existing cooperation agreements (outside Erasmus), cooperation within the international organizations/partner networks, cooperation with foreign companies, municipalities, governmental and non-governmental organizations. The strategy of internationalization of the ICS study direction includes two directions of activity: within the European Union (EU) and outside the EU. ViA has entered into about 80 cooperation agreements with the international higher education institutions. It allows to implement successful cooperation activities with different ViA partners, such as student and lecturer exchange, experience exchange, joint projects, courses, seminars, guest lectures, research and conferences,

feedback for the quality assessment of studies. An important tool of the internationalization strategy of the ICS study direction was the International Intensive Programme, the International Baltic Summer School (BISS), organized in summer of 2018 on the topic “Media Literacy and Democracy” for the second year in a row. In 2018, 14 international students from eight countries – Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, France, Ukraine, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, USA – participated in this programme. As a part of the summer school, two lecturers from the USA (one with the Fulbright specialist scholarship), one visiting professor from Sweden, one from Estonia, and EastStratCom representatives from Belgium stayed at ViA. In summer of 2021, ViA ICS lecturers are expected to organize the next International Summer School, this time focusing on the areas of Strategic Communication and Behavioural Sciences.

In the ICS study direction, a double degree cooperation agreement was entered into with Kiel University in Germany in 2017. Both higher education institutions offer professional studies at the undergraduate level. There was mutual cooperation regarding exchange of lecturers also previously. Two ICS students (one of whom is graduating from ViA in spring of 2021) have used the double degree possibility during the validity period of the agreement. Students have to obtain at least 40 credits at a partner higher education institution, and each higher education institution involved in the partnership appoints one supervisor of the Bachelor’s thesis, both supervisors jointly supervise the development of the Bachelor’s thesis. Unfortunately, there is little interest from the students on the part of the German partner due to the different length of studies – 3.5 years in Germany and four years in Latvia.

Since 2019, ViA is working on developing a double degree agreement in the programme “Strategic Communication and Governance” with Tbilisi State University.

Refer to the annex for the overview of ViA cooperation agreements (see Annex 18).

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

ViA is involved in the Latvian Education Export Association as a member and since 2019 has been participating in the joint activities of the association to attract foreign students. At the end of 2020, an initiative was created with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, within the framework of which scholarships were established for Belarusian students to study in Latvia. Five students started their studies in the ICS study direction.

Incoming and outgoing student mobility opportunities

Mechanisms for attracting international students:

- Information “study portals” – FindAMasters, topuniversities.com;
- Digital marketing on Facebook;
- Exhibitions in target countries to promote full-time higher education at ViA;
- Electronic and hard copy brochures.

Mechanisms for attracting foreign lecturers:

- Personal contact of ViA academic staff;
- Participation in conferences;
- Advertisements.

International students have access to all information electronically, and there is a guide for international students. All international students are provided with accommodation in the hostel. Visa support is provided if required. All international students have the same rights as local students.

The lecturers are given access to the infrastructure to the same extent as the local staff. If necessary, assistance is provided with the visa.

Every year, foreign lecturers who come with funding from various scholarships (Erasmus +, Fulbright) as well as within the framework of joint cooperation projects are admitted to the study field of IKZ. For the last two academic years (2018/2019 and 2019/2020), ViA is taught by a visiting professor from the University of Tartu, Andris Siibak, with whom he has also collaborated within the framework of the Baltic International Summer Schools. Two lecturers came to Ukraine from the Mohil Academy School of Journalism and within the framework of ViA International Week. In 2016 and 2019, Professor Oyvind Okland from NLA University College Gimlekollen visited the field of study as a guest lecturer. In the spring of 2021, a semester-long visit of a US visiting professor with funding from the Fulbright program is planned. Fulbright's funding in 2018 was used by a film director and lecturer at the California College of the Arts, Helen De Michiel, who taught documentary storytelling to both IKZ students and faculty. A media and journalism professor Barbara Burke was a visiting professor at ICS study direction in the academic year 2016/2017 with a Fulbright scholarship, and a fruitful cooperation with her has been continued afterwards.

The flow of incoming students at the bachelor's level consists mainly of Erasmus + exchange students. Statistics by faculties / study directions is not collected, because students take courses from the joint offer "International Study Module" (except for students from ESME Sudria, who study a specialized program from IT faculty). The study courses included in the module can be seen here: <https://va.lv/en/study-here/exchange-opportunities/courses-exchange-students> . Every year, the module includes study courses from ICS study field programs, such as Public Speaking, Mass Communication, Visual Communication Systems, Social Psychology and others. Thus, foreign students fulfil their individual exchange program together with ICS students. At the master's level, from 2019 one full-time foreign student is studying in the MIL program. In the autumn of 2020, five students from Belarus started their studies in the SCG program. A scholarship program has been set up for these students to cover their living expenses, which is financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. ViA has provided scholarships to cover tuition fees from its own resources. It will be possible to compile statistics on this flow in a few years' time as more data will be accumulated.

Refer to the annex for the overview of study mobilities carried out within the study direction (see Annex 19).

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

Internship is an integral part of ViA study programmes. The goal of internship is to provide postgraduate students with a possibility to improve their knowledge and skills acquired during the studies and to prepare for a career in the field chosen, as well as to prepare for the development of the State examination paper.

The amount of internship in the undergraduate programmes is 26 credit points, while in postgraduate programmes – two credit points. ViA has entered into agreements with a number of organizations regarding provision of internships, but each year students may look for a placement based on their interests and professional development vision. Internship within the undergraduate study programmes takes place each academic year (in amount of 4-6 credit points), while post-graduate students do internship in either the second semester (MIL) or the third semester (SCG). Internship places are approved by the director of the study direction. The defence of internship takes place publicly. There is a procedure developed for the preparation of a report on the tasks and the quality of their execution within the framework of internship. Students can assess their performance, as well as improvement of their skills during internship. An assessment of student's performance is provided also by the supervisor.

Refer to the annex for the Internship Regulations of the study programmes (see Annex 20).

Refer to the annex for the agreements regarding provision of study programme internship (see Annex 21).

5.4. In the event that joint study programmes are implemented in the study direction, provide the justification of the creation of the joint study programmes and a description and assessment of the selection of the partnering higher education institutions by including information on the principles and the procedures for the creation and implementation of these joint study programmes. In the event that no joint study programmes are implemented in the study direction, provide a description and assessment of the plans of the higher education institution/ college for the creation of such study programmes within the study direction.

(Not applicable)

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

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

In the beginning of 2012, two undergraduate programmes of the ICS study direction were accredited by the International Accreditation Commission for a period of six years, which is the maximum possible length of accreditation. The SWOT analysis carried out by the experts did not reveal any faults, only seven positive features were noted. Recommendations given by the experts were as follows:

- To focus more on extending cooperation in the region when carrying out strategic planning of the direction;
- To enlarge library and database resources available to students;
- To focus on the labour market aspects, student opportunities in the labour market when

carrying out strategic planning of the direction;

- To include a new course “Creative Writing” in the study programme content;
- To analyze programmes of similar content for the purpose of planning study programmes, to compare content;
- To integrate the course on Latvian media environment and media consumption into the MSJ programme content.

The above recommendations have been taken into account and steps are taken to implement them:

- A regional dimension is included in ViA general development strategy, therefore it also applies to the operation of the ICS study direction. In practice, since the visit of accreditation experts, ICS lecturers have implemented several cooperation activities together with Vidzeme Planning Region, both by participating in the process of smart specialization development of the region and by participating in projects implemented by the Planning Region. Cooperation with internship providers in Vidzeme region is developed and extended.
- The library collection available to students is renewed and enlarged twice a year, using ViA budget funds and alumni donations. The availability of the databases depends on the overall budget situation of ViA, and the ICS study direction cannot influence it.
- Labour market aspects are analyzed annually in the ICS self-assessment report, the labour market forecasts prepared by the Ministry of Economics are taken into account, as well as other current studies and reports on the labour market situation in the field of communication and media. A graduate survey is carried out every year, which is an important source of information on the labour market situation and student opportunities.
- The course “Creative Writing” is in place.
- Upon preparing a self-assessment report, the content of the CPR and MSJ study programmes is annually compared with the content of other similar programmes. In addition, at the end of 2014, the content of both programmes was compared with the content of communication programmes of Kiel University of Applied Sciences in Germany. This was done during the process of preparing the double degree programme agreement.
- The course “Latvian Media Environment” is included in the MSJ study programme, where both the system of Latvian media and media consumption are analyzed. This course is also offered to CPR students as a semi-elective course.

The impact of the recommendations on the quality of studies has been high, because the study programs were thus improved in accordance with the development trends of the field. In fact, after approving the new industry professional standards and comparing the content of study programs with the requirements of professional standards at the beginning of 2020, it was necessary to make small additions to the content of study programs, but not significant changes. This confirmed that the improvements made in the study programs, according to the experts' recommendations, have been very valuable.

Refer to the annex for the reports on the implementation of the recommendations (see Annex 22).

6.2. Implementation of the recommendations given by the experts during the evaluation of the changes to the relevant study programmes in the respective study direction or licensed study programmes over the reporting period or recommendations received during the procedure for the inclusion of the study programme in the accreditation form of the study direction (if applicable).

In 2018, a new academic master's study program "Media and Information Literacy" (MIL) was licensed in the study direction and in 2019, an academic master's study program "Strategic Communication and Governance" (SCG) was licensed. Licensing experts made a number of recommendations for both programs and they have been implemented. For example, the SKP program clarifies the internship regulations, reduces the initially planned amount of internships, as well as supplements the content of study courses by including the topics recommended by experts. The collection of literature in the ViA library was also supplemented and updated. An analysis of the content of similar study programs has been performed, an addendum to the agreement with Riga Stradiņš University on the transfer of foreign students has been concluded in order to provide opportunities to continue studies in English as well. Other improvements and clarifications have also been made in accordance with the recommendations of experts.

The MIL study program also fulfilled almost all recommendations, including a review of the content of study courses, a review of the final examination forms of the courses, and a clarification of the scope of study practice. One recommendation, which cannot be implemented within the study direction, is to review the structure of expenses so that the renewal of multimedia equipment can be planned from the ViA budget, and not only from the financing of projects. This is an issue that needs to be addressed at the national level, and without an increase in total revenues for higher education institutions from the state budget, it will not be possible to fully implement this recommendation. The implementation of recommendations in the MIL study program has been analyzed by developing the annual self-assessment report for 2019/2020.

Refer to the annex for the reports on the implementation of the recommendations (see Annex 22).

Annexes

I. Information on the Higher Education Institution/ College		
List of the governing regulatory enactments and regulations of the higher education institution/ college	4P-VIA-normatives-15122020.docx	4P-VIA-normativie-akti-15122020.docx
Information on the implementation of the study direction in the branches of the higher education institution/ college (if applicable)		
Management structure of the higher education institution/ college	3P_VIA_structure.pdf	3P-VIA_struktura_paplasinata_pec_18032020.pdf
II. Description of the Study Direction - 1. Management of the Study Direction		
Plan for the development of the study direction (if applicable)	IKZ-Attistiibas plāns _ICS-Development plan-16122020.docx	IKZ-Attistiibas plāns _ICS-Development plan-16122020.docx
Management structure of the study direction	7P-2.attels-Study field management structure-eng.jpg	7P-2.attels-Studiju virziena pārvaldības struktūra.jpg
II. Description of the Study Direction - 3. Resources and Provision of the Study Direction		
Basic information on the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study direction	13P-IKZ_docetaju_parskats_precizejums_16122020.edoc	13P-IKZ_docetaju_parskats_precizejums_16122020.edoc
Biographies of the teaching staff members (in Europass Curriculum Vitae format)	14P-CV-IKZ-precizejumi-2020dec.zip	14P-CV-IKZ-precizejumi-2020dec.zip
Summary of the statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of the teaching staff over the reporting period	15P-ICT-mobility lecturers-ENG.xlsx	15P-IKZ-mobiliate-docetaji.xlsx
II. Description of the Study Direction - 4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation		
List of the publications, patents, and artistic creations of the teaching staff over the reporting period	17P-IICS-list of publications-edited-16122020.docx	17P-IKZ-publikaciju saraksts-precizejums-16122020.docx
II. Description of the Study Direction - 5. Cooperation and Internationalisation		
List of cooperation agreements	18P-21P-List of cooperation agreements-ICS.docx	18P-21P-Sadarbibas ligumu saraksts.docx
Statistical data on the teaching staff and the students from abroad	19P-ICS_mobility-students-lecturers.zip	19P-IKZ-mobilitate-studenti-docetaji.zip
Statistical data on the mobility of students (by specifying the study programmes)	19P-ICS_mobility-students-lecturers.zip	19P-IKZ-mobilitate-studenti-docetaji.zip
Description of the organisation of the traineeship of the students	20P-ICS-Internship-documentation.zip	20P-IKZ-Prakses-dokumentacija.zip
Information on the agreements and other documents confirming the traineeship of the students in companies	18P-21P-List of cooperation agreements-ICT.docx	18P-21P-Sadarbibas ligumu saraksts.docx
II. Description of the Study Direction - 6. Implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures		
Overview of the implementation of the provided recommendations	22P-Recommendations implementation plans.zip	22P-Rekomendaciju izpildes plani.zip
Description of the Study Programme - Other mandatory attachments		
Confirmation signed by the rector, director or the head of the study programme or the study direction of the higher education institution/ college which states that the official language proficiency of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the relevant study programmes of the study direction complies with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.	Apliecinajums-IKZ-valsts-valoda.edoc	Apliecinajums-IKZ-valsts-valoda.edoc
III. Description of the Study Programme - 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme		
Compliance of the joint study programme with the provisions of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (table)		
Statistics on the students over the reporting period	2P-Studentu-statistika-2010-2020-AIKA-tikai-IKZ.xlsx	
III. Description of the Study Programme - 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof		
Compliance of the study programme with the State Education Standard		
Compliance of the qualification to be acquired upon completion of the study programme with the professional standard (if applicable)		
Compliance of the study programme with the specific regulatory framework applicable to the relevant field (if applicable)		
Mapping of the study courses/ modules for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study programme		
Curriculum of the study programme (for each type and form of the implementation of the study programme)		39P-MIP_istenosanas plans_23032020.docx
Descriptions of the study courses/ modules		
Description of the Study Direction - Other mandatory attachments		
Sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme.		
Description of the Study Programme - Other mandatory attachments		
Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued		

Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme		
Confirmation of the higher education institution/ college that the teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language according to European language levels (see the levels under www.europass.lv), if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.		
If the study programmes in the study direction subject to the assessment are doctoral study programmes, a confirmation that at least five teaching staff members with doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field or sub-field of science, in which the study programme has intended to award a scientific degree.		
If academic study programmes are implemented within the study direction, a document confirming that the academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the provisions set out in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause three of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education		
Sample (or samples) of the study agreement		
If academic study programmes for less than 250 full-time students are implemented within the study direction, the opinion of the Council for Higher Education shall be attached in compliance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.		
Description of the Study Direction - Other mandatory attachments		
Electronically signed application form for assessment of a study direction	00-AIC-iesniegums-IKZ-eparaksts.edoc	00-AIC-iesniegums-IKZ-eparaksts.edoc

Other annexes

Name of document	Document
[11P] ViA Ētikas nolikums un ētikas pārkāpumu shēma	11P-ViA_Ētikas nolikums_26042017.pdf
[11P] ViA Ētikas nolikums un ētikas pārkāpumu shēma	11P-Ētikas pārkāpumu izskatīšanas procedūra_shēma.pdf
[12P] Nolikums "Par vēlēšanām akadēmiskajos un zinātniskajos amatos Vidzemes Augstskolā"	12P-Nolikums-par-velesanam-akademiskie_amati_20070627.doc
[22P] Rekomendāciju izpildes plāni	22P-Rekomendāciju izpildes plāni.zip
5P-ViA_Studiju-kvalitates-nodrosinasanas-politika-APST-31012020-LV.pdf	5P-ViA_Studiju-kvalitates-nodrosinasanas-politika-APST-31012020-LV.pdf
5P-ViA_Studiju-kvalitates-nodrosinasanas-politika-APST-31012020-ENG.pdf	5P-ViA_Studiju-kvalitates-nodrosinasanas-politika-APST-31012020-ENG.pdf
8P-Uzņemšanas_noteikumi_2020-2021_APST-30102019-ped - groz-17062020.pdf	8P-Uzņemšanas_noteikumi_2020-2021_APST-30102019-ped - groz-17062020.pdf
8P-Uzņemšanas_noteikumi_2020-2021_APST-30102019-ENG.docx	8P-Uzņemšanas_noteikumi_2020-2021_APST-30102019-ENG.docx
9P-Studiju-rezultatu-atzinasanas-nolikums-APST-28082019.pdf	9P-Studiju-rezultatu-atzinasanas-nolikums-APST-28082019.pdf
10P-ViA_Studiju_nolikums_APST-ar-ped- groz-31012020-LV.doc	10P-ViA_Studiju_nolikums_APST-ar-ped- groz-31012020-LV.doc
10P-ViA_Studiju_nolikums_APST-ar-ped- groz-31012020-ENG.doc	10P-ViA_Studiju_nolikums_APST-ar-ped- groz-31012020-ENG.doc
16P-Darba_samaksas_nolikums_20200930.zip	16P-Darba_samaksas_nolikums_20200930.zip
1P-2020FEB-ViA-studiju-programmas.xls	1P-2020FEB-ViA-studiju-programmas.xls
2P-Studentu-statistika-2010-2020-AIKA.xlsx	2P-Studentu-statistika-2010-2020-AIKA.xlsx
1P-2020FEB-ViA-study-programms.xls	1P-2020FEB-ViA-study-programms.xls
10P-ViA_Study-regulations_CONF-last-changed-31012020-ENG.doc	10P-ViA_Study-regulations_CONF-last-changed-31012020-ENG.doc
11P-Regulations-of-ethics-26042017-ENG.doc	11P-Regulations-of-ethics-26042017-ENG.doc
11P-Ethical Infringement Procedure Scheme.docx	11P-Ethical Infringement Procedure Scheme.docx
12P-Regulations-for-elections-in-academic-positions_20070627.doc	12P-Regulations-for-elections-in-academic-positions_20070627.doc
9P-Study-results-recognition-regulations-APPROVED-28082019.docx	9P-Study-results-recognition-regulations-APPROVED-28082019.docx
8P-Admission-Rules_2020-2021_APPROVED-30102019-ENG.docx	8P-Admission-Rules_2020-2021_APPROVED-30102019-ENG.docx
16P-Salary-Regulations-20200930.zip.zip	16P-Salary-Regulations-20200930.zip.zip
22P-Recommendations implementation plans.zip	22P-Recommendations implementation plans.zip
2P-Studentu-statistika-2010-2020-AIKA-IKZ.xlsx	2P-Studentu-statistika-2010-2020-AIKA-IKZ.xlsx
2P-Student-statistics-2010-2020-AIKA-IKZ.png	2P-Student-statistics-2010-2020-AIKA-IKZ.png
ViA student cost calculation methodology	ViA-studentu-pasizmaksas-kalkulācijas-metodika-2017OKT_Latvian.pdf
ICT full time foreign students	IKZ-arvalstu studenti_ICT-foreign students.xlsx
Budget plan 2020 Latvian	Copy of Budzets_plans_2020_KOM_akredit_Latvian.xlsx
Databases & links to library catalogue	Datu_bazes_IKZ_ekspertiem_Lat and Eng.docx
Presentation by Rector	IKZ_virziens_vadiba_v1.pptx
Presentation related to financing	IKZ_ViAprezentacija_IP.pptx
MIL thesis 1	Igavina_Jana_MD_2020.pdf
MIL thesis 2	Karole_Elina_MD_2020.pdf
MIL thesis 3	Kine_Kristine_MD_2020.pdf
MIL thesis 4	Maurane_Mara_MD-2021.pdf
MIL thesis 5	Sabine_Muceniece_MD_2020.pdf
MIL thesis 6	SILINA_DACE_MD_2021.pdf
CPR thesis 1	Gaile_GerdaAjanta_BD_2020.pdf
CPR thesis 2	Grosa_Regina_BD_2020.pdf
CPR thesis 3	Gulbinova_Inga_BD_2020.pdf
CPR thesis 4	Sabule_AnnijaKeita_BD_2020.pdf
MSJ thesis 1	Adamsone_Santa_BD_2020.pdf
MSJ thesis 2	Galimzanova_Arina_BD_2020.pdf
MSJ thesis 3	Kalnina_Elina_BD_2020.pdf

MSJ thesis 4	Mezciema_Edite_BD_2020.pdf
MSJ thesis 5	Putnina_Beate_BD_2020.pdf
Student survey results 1	KSA_kursu_novertejums_2019rud.sem..xlsx
Student survey results 2	KSA_kursu_novertejums_2020pav.sem..xlsx
Student survey results 3	KSA_MSZ_kursu_novertejums_1_2019rud.xlsx
Student survey results 4	KSA_MSZ_kursu_novertejums_2019rud.xlsx
Student survey results 5	KSA_MSZ_kursu_novertejums_2020pav.xlsx
Student survey results 6	MIP_kursu_novertejums_1_2019rud.xlsx
Student survey results 7	MIP_kursu_novertejums_2019rud.sem.xlsx
Student survey results 8	MIP_kursu_novertejums_2020.pav.sem.xlsx
Student survey results 9	MSZ_kursu_novertejums_2020pav.sem..xlsx
Academic staff - updated data	IKZ_ICA_academic_staff_docetaju_parskata_tabula.xlsx
Prolonging strategy	Izraksts_ViA_strategija_0196.pdf
Student geography (Latvian)	IKZ_studentsu_geografija.docx
Appeals by students (Latvian)	Parskats_par_IKZ_studentsu_iesniegtajam_apelacijam.docx
Name of Master's degree	par_magistra_programmas_iegustamo_gradu.docx
Literature lists 1	KSA_2021.docx
Literature lists 2	MIP_2021.docx
Literature lists 3	MSZ_2021.docx
Literature lists 4	SKP_2021.docx
Study regulations LV	10P-ViA_Studiju_nolikums_APST-ar-ped-groz-27012021.pdf
Study regulations ENG	10P-ViA_STUDY-REGULATIONS_APPR-last-am-27012021-ENG.pdf
Consolidation plan	ViA_SP_att_kons_plans_29112018-red10062020-2v.docx
Books added to library catalogue 1	2021_jaunieguvumi_IKZ_Davidsone_davinajums.doc
Books added to library catalogue 2	2021_Routledge_pirkums_IKZ.doc

Media Studies and Journalism

Title of the higher education institution	<i>Information and Communication Sciences</i>
ProcedureStudyProgram.Name	<i>Media Studies and Journalism</i>
Education classification code	<i>42321</i>
Type of the study programme	<i>Professional bachelor study programme</i>
Name of the study programme director	<i>Agnese</i>
Surname of the study programme director	<i>Dāvidsone</i>
E-mail of the study programme director	<i>agnese.davidsone@va.lv</i>
Title of the study programme director	<i>PhD</i>
Phone of the study programme director	<i>26603344</i>
Goal of the study programme	<i>The goal of the study programme is to prepare competent, highly qualified and competitive media professionals and journalists for the work related to media content production and distribution in organizations and their own companies, during studies especially focusing on the latest tendencies in media development both from the point of view of media content production and media management. The study programme helps develop skills and competences necessary for the production of high-quality and up-to-date media content. The study programme provides knowledge and insight into media and wider communication processes; media production, content creation and content consumption processes; interaction between communication and information technologies and social changes and how it affects the field of media and society as a whole, State and public administration, functioning of the political and economic system, etc.</i>

Tasks of the study programme	<p><i>To implement the programme, the following objectives are set:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>- To acquire communication science theory, basic theories of sociology and social psychology, theoretical framework and practical skills of communication ethics, argumentation and persuasion;</i> <i>- To develop critical thinking, information analysis and argumentation skills, as well as to perfect self-reflection skills, preparing students for both professional and lifelong learning;</i> <i>- To acquire methods of social science research, including specific media research methods, and apply them practically in applied research;</i> <i>- To provide in-depth knowledge of the field of media and changes thereof, the work of a journalist in different media organizations, to provide a possibility to acquire skills to collect, process and present information in a variety of journalism genres and on various information distribution platforms, to engage audience;</i> <i>- To acquire specialized knowledge of the fundamentals of traditional and new media content production and distribution, media operation logic and legal framework;</i> <i>- To develop creative thinking, cooperation, leadership and other multiskill abilities;</i> <i>- To acquire academic knowledge and research skills for postgraduate studies;</i> <i>- To develop and update a high-quality study content in accordance with theoretical, research and methodological innovations in communication science and dynamics of societal, cultural and political context;</i> <i>- To diversify methods used in the study process, to implement pedagogical innovations, to improve lecturers' teaching skills to prepare students for the work in a dynamic and complex labour environment.</i>
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Results of the study programme	<p><i>The study programme “Media Studies and Journalism” provides a possibility to acquire the following knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes:</i></p> <p>KNOWLEDGE <i>Knowledge and understanding of current political, social and economic processes in Latvia and in the world; knowledge of the role of information and communication technologies in communication processes; understanding of the specificity of the various fields of information production and broadcasting: public relations, advertising, content produced by online opinion leaders;</i> <i>understanding of the functions and role of the media in the development of democratic society; knowledge of adhering to the aspects of journalism ethics;</i> <i>understanding of media language diversity; understanding of media content production processes, business opportunities in the field of media.</i></p> <p>SKILLS <i>Skills to work individually or cooperate in a team/group, to plan and organize effectively one’s own work; to prioritize the work to be performed; to persuade others and substantiate one’s own opinion; to observe principles of academic and media ethics; to be able to communicate in the Latvian language and in a foreign language acquired; to use information and communication technologies for storing and processing information; to comply with data security requirements; communication skills.</i></p> <p>COMPETENCE <i>Competences to collect, compile, process and present information according to the chosen media type and genre, to interpret information in accordance with the conventional requirements of the genre,</i> <i>to explain, analyze or comment, to evaluate critically information sources, methods of collecting selected information, to verify reliability of the sources, to strive for truthful information, to balance opposite views, to observe a principle of diversity of information sources, to plan, organize and manage information collection, processing and presentation processes; to comply with the requirements of the law and code of ethics; competence to use information and communication technologies in public processes, to represent one own’s interests, to engage the audience; to operate in compliance with civil protection and environmental protection requirements.</i></p> <p><i>The study programme “Media Studies and Journalism” enables improvement of the following attitudes: sense of responsibility, honesty, determination, accuracy, willingness to learn, initiative and tolerance.</i></p>
Final examination upon the completion of the study programme	Bachelor’s Thesis

Study programme forms

Full time studies - 4 years - latvian

Study type and form	Full time studies
Duration in full years	4

Duration in month	0
Language	latvian
Amount (CP)	160
Admission requirements (in English)	Secondary education
Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	Professional bachelor's degree in media studies
Qualification to be obtained (in english)	Journalist

Places of implementation

Place name	City	Address
Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences	VALMIERA	CĒSU IELA 4, VALMIERA, VALMIERAS NOVADS, LV-4201

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

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

There have been no changes in the main parameters of the study program. In accordance with the recommendations received during the previous evaluation, new study courses are included ("Creative Writing", "Latvian Media Environment"). The content of the study program has been evaluated and analyzed after the approval of the new professional standard in the beginning of 2020. The results of the study program and study courses have been mapped, their compliance with the professional standard has been evaluated. The results of the analysis are that no significant changes have been necessary, except for certain aspects or topics that have been incorporated into the content of existing courses, such as the topic of media criticism as a journalism genre course "Journalism Genres and Techniques II".

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

Statistics on students (see *Annex 2*) show a tendency – there is a sign that the number of students is gradually decreasing. Unfortunately, the interest of high school students in future media career opportunities is declining. From 2020, Kārlis Dagilis, a media professional, has been involved in the study direction, who is developing a concept for the possibilities of renewing the study program and increasing its popularity.

The ratio of the number of graduates to the admitted students in both study programmes is 70% in the reporting period, which is a good indicator. Upon analyzing drop-out rates, the average rate is 6-8% due to different reasons. Rarely students indicate that studies are terminated due to an inappropriately chosen study programme. Increasingly frequent drop-out reason is inability to combine studies with the work because student parents can not provide financial support. In such situations, of course, the primary choice is working for a living. Unfortunately, more and more students want to terminate their studies due to health problems. In such situations, there is always a possibility to study according to the individual plan, and some of those students do so. Those who resume their studies after an academic break study according to the individual plan. The academic break is mostly used for the purpose of child care. The CPR study programme has comparatively higher rates of students who have dropped out prior to graduation. Often this is due to the fact that a student has shown himself/herself well during internship and received a job offer. Both study programmes of the study direction work individually with each student who is exmatriculated due to academic debt or after completion of a theoretical programme without defending the Bachelor's thesis. These students are contacted regarding resumption possibilities to complete their studies,

which many of them use. There are quite a few cases where the final thesis is defended even 4-6 years after the completion of the theoretical course.

Refer to the the annex for the overview of the number of students in the study programme ([see Annex 2](#)).

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

Throughout the process of preparation of the study programme and also later in the following years, efforts have been made to review the study programme to ensure the compliance of the name of the programme with the degree and the professional qualification to be awarded. In each accreditation period, an in-depth analysis of the interconnection between the programme objectives and the planned outcomes has been carried out in order to ensure interconnection of the objectives and outcomes, and to improve the study programme content in accordance with the development tendencies of the field. Descriptions of the goals and objectives of the study programme have been used to map study courses. Relevance and coherence between the outcomes of the study programme and the results of specific study courses are assessed annually by preparing a self-assessment report. Information on the progress of the study programme implementation and achievement of the set objectives is assessed every academic year when meeting with students, at the study direction council meetings, and meetings of the study direction lecturers. In this way, coherence between the outcomes of the study programme and the results of specific study courses is achieved. The admission requirements to the study programme are formulated to attract students who are capable and interested in working in the information and communication environment (results of centralized examinations in Latvian and English), who want to orientate in the events of Latvia and the world, work with information and communication technologies, to plan and manage their own work, as well as to plan and manage various resources required for professional activities. Taking into account that student research work is also an important component of the study programme, those who have shown good results in pupil research competitions have an advantage in admission.

Admission requirements for applicants are laid down in the *ViA Admission Regulations for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Study Programmes*, which, in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, are approved by November 1 of the current year and published on the [ViA website](#). In order to start studies, it is required to have at least secondary education. There is a mandatory requirement for the admission competition – passed centralized examinations in Latvian, mathematics and in one of the foreign languages. Also, for the purposes of calculation of the competition score, ViA takes into account the marks indicated in the secondary education documents in the following subjects: Latvian, English, mathematics (or algebra and geometry), history of Latvia and world history, as well as information science.

Applicants who got the 2nd and 3rd places in the school subject Olympiads of the Republic of Latvia (during the last 2 years), the 1st degree laureates of the Latvian pupils' research conferences (during the last 2 years) in the following sections: Latvian linguistics, psychology, sociology, political science, economics, or who have participated in ViA School of Media Literacy, have a possibility to get additional points to their score in the admission competition.

Besides, the 1st place winners in the school subject Olympiads of the Republic of Latvia and the 1st - 3rd place winners in international subject Olympiads (during the last 2 years), and the 1st place winner in Vidzeme region Junior Achievement Latvia competition “Best in Economics”, the laureate of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, according to ViA Admission Regulations, shall be admitted to the MSJ programme outside the competition.

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

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

At the end of 2019, the occupational standard “Journalist” was updated – the Director of the study field and also a number of lecturers met with professionals in the field, discussed the compliance of the study programme with the industry's vision of the profession. The professional standard was approved at the meeting of the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council for Vocational Education and Employment on 28 February 2020 (Minutes No. 2). A comparison was made between the results specified in the study programme and the requirements of the professional standard. It was concluded that the content of the study programme complies with the requirements included in the standard. The study program includes certain aspects and topics, for example, classes on media criticism as a genre of journalism are included.

The study programme is improved every year, based on the recommendations of students and employers. During the previous accreditation period, already before the development of the new professional standard, such new study courses as "Multimedia Journalism", "Photography Basics", "Cultural Journalism" were included in the study programme, as well as the course "Entrepreneurship in Creative Industries" to promote students' entrepreneurial skills and encourage the formation of new media companies. The development of entrepreneurial skills is also promoted within the course “Modelling of Business Management Processes”, which is implemented in the form of an intensive social simulation together with students of other bachelor study programmes at ViA Faculty of Society and Science. The course “International Media” has been developed as a part of restricted elective courses, as well as the course on cinematic language and aesthetics “Cinematic Voyage” for a better understanding of visual communication culture. Understanding the essential role of the media in democratic processes, the study course “Media Literacy and Democracy” took place in the form of an intensive summer school in 2017 and 2018 in cooperation with Riga Stradins University and the lecturers and students of the University of Minnesota (USA). Following the recommendations by the previous accreditation experts, the course “Latvian Media Environment” has been developed.

It is stated in the report by media researcher Anda Rožukalne to the Ministry of Culture (2015) that media organizations are unable to predict the exact number of new journalists needed in the future.

At the same time, media organizations impose very high quality demands on young professionals, admitting that they are expecting, in a sense, fully “mature” potential employees. In the media environment, applicants who have already practical experience in the media, are familiar with specifics of a particular field, such as TV, radio, local newspaper, and can quickly integrate into editorial processes, are preferred. This aspect is an advantage for the graduates from ViA MSJ programme, considering that journalism programmes implemented in Latvia are mostly academic, with a very limited number of credits allocated for internship, while ViA offers professional Bachelor’s programmes. In addition, the ability of young professionals to create multimedia content is highly valued by media editors, according to a case study on media and journalism education in Latvia commissioned by the Ministry of Culture (Juzefovičs, 2015). ViA MSJ programme ensures that students are able to use a variety of formats in their work, create content for both print and electronic media, and work in online media environment. Analysis of feedback given by internship supervisors of MSJ students reflect the following positive tendency: internship supervisors ask students to do internship repeatedly, often offering job opportunities at the end of internship, usually initially on an author’s contract or freelance basis, and later offering a full-time employment.

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

Information included in the study courses and the results to be achieved are reviewed every year, the lecturers take into account tendencies of the field and feedback given by the students regarding the study courses, and the literature used for studies is supplemented every year. Upon preparing the self-assessment report, formulations of the study programme goals are also reviewed each year, and, where necessary, adjusted with respect to the content of the studies and methods used in the study process, including, where appropriate, information in accordance with the tendencies of the field (e.g., development of media policy in Latvia, changes in media environment, etc.). Based on this analysis, outcomes of the study courses are mapped, thus verifying the compliance of each individual course with the goals and objectives set in the study programme. Mapping of the courses of the MSJ study programme is added in the annex to the report showing how individual study courses contribute to the achievement of the study programme outcomes.

Refer to the annex for the mapping of the study courses for achieving the study results of the MSJ study programme ([see Annex 23](#))

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

The study programme is implemented by help of various study forms – lectures, seminars, discussions, practical classes, use of on-line resources, social simulations, role plays, literature studies, applied games, individual and group consultations, study visits, case studies, analysis of audio and video materials, development of student practical work (individually and group-work), fieldwork, visualization, academic posters, multimedia presentations, skype conferences. Advanced information technologies are widely used in the study process. During lectures, lecturers and students have an opportunity to use computer classrooms, multimedia laboratory, as well as the modern TV studio made anew in 2017. During the study process, opportunities provided by the intranet are actively used: moodle.va.lv – it is an electronic study environment, where necessary study materials and lecture presentations of each study course are stored, information is exchanged, where students post their presentations and homework; it is used also as ViA electronic repository of documents; intranet message repository; email, skype, social media. A student has to acquire an average of 50-100 pages of scientific text per credit. No less than two individual papers should be written in each study course, as well as examinations have to be taken. At the end of the course, each student has to take a written or oral examination or a test, or submit a larger presentation demonstrating the knowledge acquired during the course. Such a diverse range of study methods and technological tools ensures high quality studies – students acquire and perfect both academic knowledge and skills already in the course of the studies. In this way, a diverse, attractive and engaging study process is ensured providing also authentic experience (simulation games, role-plays), opportunities to develop portfolios useful for further career (multimedia projects, written, visual communication projects), as a result students are well prepared for professional activity in the field of communication.

The following forms of work are used to promote the dialogue with students: studies in small groups, which promote student involvement in the study process; application of interactive study methods; assessment of independent and research papers and their discussion with the authors; annual projects, peer review and public defence; consultations; cumulative assessment system; student surveys about the study course. Individual communication between a lecturer and a student (outside lectures, seminars and classes) is possible through individual consultations with the lecturer, as well as via e-mail and skype.

For more information on assessment methods and adherence to the principles of student-centred education, see *Part II, section 1.6 of the self-assessment report*.

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

An important part of the study process is annual internship that takes place in cooperation with the communication field. The Internship Regulations are approved in the ICS study direction. In accordance with the Internship Regulations, MSJ students do internship every year in amount of 6 CP (240 hours). Internship ensures the achievement of planned outcomes of the study programme related to acquisition of practical skills and approbation of theoretical knowledge in practical activity. Internship also facilitates the link between students and the labour market already during

their studies, and often students start working for one of their internship providers during their studies. Internship is an important component of both ICS undergraduate programmes, therefore students are also supported in a variety of ways so that internship experience can be productive and positive. The director and lecturers of the study programme actively communicate with representatives of the field, encouraging them to provide internship possibilities. Taking into account that MSJ has a good reputation among professionals of the field, the organizations themselves readily offer internship possibilities. Information on internship possibilities is e-mailed to students. Students apply for internship places every year by filling in the application form, ViA assigns students for internship, supervises internship and engages in communication with an internship provider, if necessary. Before internship, the student and the supervisor agree on specific tasks to be performed during internship in accordance with the Internship Regulations. Within the framework of internship, students fill in the internship journal, as well as assess experience and knowledge acquired. The internship supervisor also gives his/her assessment in writing. At the end of the internship period, internship is defended. During defence, students present their work, discuss the progress of internship, observations, reflect on their performance, as well as provide feedback on how the knowledge acquired during the studies helped accomplish internship objectives. During internship defence, ideas have been formulated more than once on how to change the course of the study programme (for example, the need to include particular courses in the earlier study stages) and which topics could supplement the content of the study programme. [The Internship Regulations and samples of internship documentation are added in Annex 20. Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences has entered into a number of “umbrella” agreements for the provision of internship possibilities – a list of agreements is added in Annex 18 to the report.](#)

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

The study programme envisages the development of annual projects and Bachelor’s thesis, which help apply and integrate theoretical and practical knowledge and develop skills and abilities to conduct research. Theses cover a very wide range of topics: journalism as a profession, media environment development tendencies and development of the digital information environment, audience and media content research. Some of the topics of the Bachelor’s theses written by the MSJ students during the period of time since 2013 are given below.

1. Journalism as a profession:

Satisfaction of Latvian media journalists with work and future plans

Career development experience of young journalists

Professional PR journalist: Practical and ethical considerations

Educational needs of the regional journalists of Latvia

Suicide publications and ethics: Viewpoint of journalists

Interest of Vidzeme high school students in journalism

Identification of competences necessary for successful studies

Factors shaping the editorial position of the largest Latvian news portals – Apollo, Tvnet and Delfi: Audience, editorial and journalistic influence

Information verification methods and awareness of truth among Latvian online journalists

Young PR professionals in the Latvian labour market: Experience of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences graduates

Awareness of Latvian politicians of the media role and tasks

Formulation and implementation of ethical principles in the Latvian media

Gatekeeping practices of the Latvian media editorial staff when working with information published in the social media

Views of the Latvian media editors and journalists on the media role in society

2. Media environment development tendencies:

Changes in content production of regional and local TV and changes in audience relationships after content inclusion in Re:TV channel. Perspective of the television representatives

Business development of the Latvian print media online platforms

Editorial, audience and advertisers point of view on “What Car’s” convergence process

Prospects for economic development of Latvian daily newspapers

The practice of editing comment sections of Latvian news portals

Magazine “Ilustrētā Junioriem” – audience attraction and sales promotion solutions

Development of the Latvian regional newspaper news portals: Economic aspects

Cyber-terror: Perspective of children and youth in Ropaži municipality

Facebook filter bubbles

Decline in advertising revenue in the Latvian press. Influence of advertisers on the editorial work of magazines

3. Audience research:

Audience and television news programme readings: News coverage on transition to euro in Latvia

Verification of content generated by social media users in television news production practice in Latvia: Problems and solutions. Case of microblogging website Twitter

Public perception of paralympians: Features of media-generated disability models

Satisfaction of target audience with the lifestyle magazine: Example of the SHAPE

Usage of the Internet media “Stils bez tabu” and compliance with the wishes of its audience

Use of portal Draugiem.lv for communication with Latvian diaspora living in Great Britain

Use of social media YouTube ads in Latvia

Interpretation and responses to requests for help published on Twitter: User perspective

Use of the Internet and its role in improving the quality of life for seniors

Habits and motivation of youth to watch the television show “Izklausies redzēts”

Consumption of the Internet media in the Latvian language by Latvians living in Great Britain

Showing off and strategic deception on online dating websites in Latvia

Audience media literacy and attitude to unfair media practices: Example of hidden advertising

Social media abandonment and replacement of social media functions

Link between media consumption and satisfaction with life among women

Interpretation of television content on acceptance of asylum seekers in Latvia

Link between the existence of possible eating disorders and body-shaming media consumption patterns among women

Facebook's "like" and "share" meaning among Y generation users in Latvia

Instagram user awareness of privacy

Instagram user trust in influencers

4. Media content research:

Environmental and nature topics in the print press: The third awakening and nowadays

Frame of domestic violence in Latvian print and online media from 2010 to 2013

Culture of death in Latvian print media

Coverage of the Baltic Sea Region in the online media Newswave

Semiotic and narrative analysis of Princess Diana's living conditions in the documentary "Unlawful Killing" and the feature movie "Diana"

Communication of environmental NGOs through online social networking sites

Representation of people with physical and mental disabilities in popular movies - nowadays stereotypes and tendencies

Reflection of science in the Latvian news media

Reflection of refugees and asylum seekers in the Latvian media: Hostility or hospitality

Political forces in the Latvian press: Use of metaphors before and after the 12th Saeima elections

Social roles of the school teachers in the media

Romantic relationships in Latvian teenage magazines

Representation of Muslims on the Latvian public media Internet platform "Ism.lv": Principles of operation when representing other cultures

LGBT issues in Latvian and Russian versions of DELFI in 2015

Public shaming in social media

Cognitive tendencies in representing healthy eating in the media

The meaning and functions of silence and pause in the interaction process: Example of the Latvian radio programme "Monopoly"

In Latvia, education is often criticized for assessment "inflation". It is not true regarding the ICS

study direction. During the reporting period, the average grade of the final papers in the MSJ and CPR study programmes was between 7 and 7.5. There has been a slight increase in the average grade since 2013 due to the improved student support system for the development of final papers – students submit the topics of the papers at the end of the 6th semester, while in the 7th semester there is the study course “Research Internship”, during which students prepare and defend the introduction and the literature review of their papers. In the middle of the 8th semester, there is a pre-defence of the final papers, during which students present the data collected and the first conclusions from the data analysis. This ensures development of the final paper in a timely manner and paper development monitoring at the level of the study direction, besides, possible problems are detected earlier, students are more motivated to consult actively with their supervisors in a timely manner, etc. The methodological guidelines for the development of papers were also improved several times during the reporting period – the most recent version was developed in 2019. An overview of the average grades of the graduation papers by years is presented in *Table 9*.

Table 9. Overview of the average grades of the graduation papers by years

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
MSJ	7.1	7.09	6.8	7.38	7.1	6.8	7.6	7.4

Refer to the annex for the informative overview on the compliance of the MSJ study programme with the State education standard (*see Annex 24*).

Refer to the annex for the informative overview on the compliance of the qualification obtained in the MSJ study programme with the profession standard (a sample of the recommended form is in Annex 7) (*see Annex 25*).

Refer to the annex for the plan of the MSJ study programme (*see Annex 26*).

Refer to the annex for the descriptions of the MSJ study programme courses (*see Annex 27*).

Refer to the annex for the sample study agreement of the MSJ study programme (*see Annex 28*).

Refer to the annex for the sample of the MSJ study programme diploma and its supplement (*see Annex 29*)

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

Qualified communication and media managers and specialists are increasingly in demand in the Latvian labour market. The demand will remain according to the report of the Ministry of Economics on labour market forecasts for the group of professions “senior specialists of legal, social and cultural affairs”, which includes both journalists and communications specialists. Each year professionals who participate in the work of the State Examination Commission confirm the high level of student qualification. Another proof of employment prospects is the employment of graduates. According to ViA graduate survey carried out in spring of 2018, 93.1% of them are

employed. This is the highest indicator since 2010. MSJ graduates work in the profession corresponding to their degree and qualification after completing their undergraduate studies. Several continue their education at the Master's level and work at the same time. These data confirm that the study programme meets the requirements of the field, is up-to-date and provides the knowledge, skills and competences necessary in the field. The study programme is improved every year based on student and employer recommendations. Taking into account the rapid changes in the communication environment and consultations with both employers and students, during the last accreditation period the following new study courses were included in the study programme: "Latvian Media Environment", "Basics of Photography", "Multimedia Journalism", students also take courses that enhance development of entrepreneurial skills in the media industry "Entrepreneurship in Creative Industries". Taking into consideration the views of professionals, a course "Argumentation and Critical Thinking" is also included in the programme. At the end of 2019, the director and several lecturers of the ICS study direction cooperated with the professional association of the field - Latvian Association of Journalists - for the purpose of updating the profession standard "Journalist".

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

During the accreditation period, a total of 49 mobilities have been implemented in the study program, going both to study at a foreign university and on internship. During the accreditation period, we are seeing a gradual decline in the number of mobilities and this is related to the decreasing motivation of students to go outside Latvia, as well as to the reduced amount of funding for students from Latvia. In general, the opportunities for mobility in the study program are abundant, the list of partner universities is updated and reviewed every year, and new agreements are concluded periodically. In accordance with the Erasmus Charter and the Tripartite Mobility Agreement, the credits obtained at a foreign university or internship organization, are transferred to ViA credits. Upon returning from exchange studies or internships, the student continues to study at ViA according to an individual plan.

For additional information, see *section 5 of Part II* of the self-assessment report.

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

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

The base of resources and provision necessary for the implementation of the study program is appropriate to the needs of the study program, except for one aspect - for a long time Latvia has not succeeded to develop a system for a joint access to scientific databases of all higher education institutions. ViA can afford access from its budget that provides basic needs for students, as well as ViA library staff regularly collects and provides information on all open access options, database trials that are offered. This circumstance affects students' research activities. In order to compensate for this circumstance, the collection of ViA library books is carefully and regularly supplemented in accordance with the needs of the study program. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ViA librarians ensured that students were electronically prepared and sent the books they needed for their studies or research.

The study program pays great attention to students' practical skills of creating and distributing media content. For this purpose, a perfectly suitable infrastructure has been created and a professional, enthusiastic and result-oriented team of lecturers has been completed, as well as industry professionals are invited within the study courses. Since the middle of 2020, ViA has completed the creation of a modern and versatile TV studio.

The financial base available for the study program is sufficient to cover the salary of the lecturers, the opportunity to go on study visits, to renew the library collections. The material and technical base as auditoriums, computer auditoriums is maintained uniformly for all ViA study programs and is not kept separately for single study programs.

In general, it can be said that, except for better access to scientific databases, the rest of the set of resources and support is fully in line with the conditions for the implementation of the study program and the achievement of study results.

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 and the consequent shift to online studies fully demonstrated that ViA is ready to adapt to the changing situation and that the infrastructure base is fully adapted to it. From the first day of online studies in March 2020, classes take place on the webex platform, moodle system and e-mail system fully support the exchange of information, notification of news, notification of changes between lecturers and students.

Information on the resources of the study programme and its provision is available in *Part II sections 3.1 to 3.3.*

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

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

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

MSJ is a professional study programme, therefore attention is always paid to cooperation with the professionals of the field. There are 26 academic staff members teaching in this study program

This is a reason why during the reporting period quite a few guest lecturers are involved in the programme (radio journalist K. Dagilis, photographer Z. Kazanovskis, TV and multimedia expert Reinis Bajors, disinformation researcher N. Aleksejeva, media law expert R. Gulbis, journalist with experience in international media A. Jolkina, etc.). Lecturers of several study courses (e.g., "Multimedia Communication") were replaced in pursuit of closer cooperation with the field, attracting young and creative professionals which would enhance the quality of studies. Several elected lecturers (see *Part II, section 4.4*) received a doctoral degree during the reporting period. Information on the elected lecturers is available in *Part II, sections 3.4. and 3.5*).

A lot of study courses are implemented by elected lecturers cooperating with guest lecturers. In this way, a good balance is achieved between the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and its approbation, as well as topical issues of the field are integrated in the study process.

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

Selection of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the Media Studies and Journalism study programme is based on the following criteria: the direction of research and topics of previous research, competence acquired in academic work (preparation of study courses) and knowledge related to the programme content, scientific degree and qualification. A prerequisite for election to academic position is a doctoral degree or a status of doctoral candidate (with the exception of specific courses such as "Environmental Management and Protection" and "Civil Protection"), doctoral studies at later study stages, and English language proficiency at least B2 level.

Selection of guest lecturers is based on professional experience, reputation and recognition in the field, including research direction and international recognition in the field of media and communication science, management, as well as practical work experience, as it is, for example, in case of communication and media law courses where Dr. iur. Rihards Gulbis is attracted as a guest lecturer – he has long-term experience in the field of copyright, including experience in working as a scientific analytical advisor to the Supreme Court.

The interdisciplinary nature of the study program determines the broad range of disciplines (communication, media, political science, law, governance, entrepreneurship, information and communication technologies) represented by the teaching staff attracted. All the lecturers involved in the implementation of the study programme have the level of foreign language knowledge that meets the requirements of the regulatory enactments – B2 level or higher. In 2018-2019, a part of ViA elected lecturers is improving their foreign language skills by participating in the English language training sessions within the framework of the ESF project "Development of Academic Staff and Human Resources of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences" (SAM 8.2.2)".

Information on the involvement of the academic staff in scientific research, both nationally and internationally, is available in *Part II, section 4.4*.

4.3. Information on the number of the scientific publications of the academic staff members, involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme, as published during the reporting period by listing the most significant publications published in Scopus or WoS CC indexed journals. As for the social sciences, humanitarian sciences, and the science of art, the scientific publications published in ERIH+ indexed journals may be additionally specified (if applicable).

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

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

In 2018, the lecturers involved in the ViA Media Studies and Journalism study program implemented the project "Involvement of Mass Media in the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in Latvia" supported by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The results of this project, are integrated in the study courses "Latvian Media Environment" and "Media Ethics". In 2020, ViA participated in the RSU-led National Research Program project "Life with Covid-19: Assessment of the Coronavir Crisis in Latvia and Proposals for Future Societal Sustainability (COVID Life)". development of society in Latvia. The results of this project are integrated in the study course "Sociology", in the topics about the development of the civil society in Latvia.

The summary about the scientific activity of the academic staff is available in *Part II, section 4.4* of the report.

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

Upon planning and implementing study courses, lecturers pay attention to planning student individual and group work in such formats that would allow students to perfect or test the knowledge acquired through practical tasks – social simulation, strategic games. This approach is in line with the general tendency regarding acquisition of communication science at the higher education institutions in Europe – to offer an integrated approach to the training of young professionals that addresses thinking, process management and operational activity level. Such an approach is possible because a lot of study courses are implemented by cooperation between elected lecturers and guest lecturers – professionals of the field. In this way, a good balance is achieved between the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and its approbation, as well as topical issues of the field are integrated in the study process.

There are many thematically similar study courses in the Media Studies and Journalism study program, for example, in the field of multimedia ("Multimedia Communication", "Multimedia Journalism", "Radio and TV Journalism", partly also "Genres and Techniques of Journalism I and II"). In order to ensure the continuity of these courses, lecturers' meetings have been held several times to discuss the content of the courses, the distribution of topics between the courses. There has also been a re-planning of the course between semesters (for example, to keep the course "Multimedia Journalism" as the last one that students acquire in the study program, because in this course it is important to apply to knowledge and skills, gained in other courses earlier. Similarly, the course block dedicated to the development of students' research skills: "Research Methodology I and II", Research Practice, and the lecturers of these courses also have met and discussed to find the best model for to gradually and to an appropriate extent ensure the development of students' research competencies, so that students in the 4th study year would be prepared for the development of a bachelor's thesis, as well as for research work as part of their professional career after the graduation from the studies.

26 lecturers are involved in the implementation of the study program, which currently forms the ratio of 26 lecturers to 43 students (1.7 students per lecturer).

Annexes

III. Description of the Study Programme - 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme		
Compliance of the joint study programme with the provisions of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (table)		
Statistics on the students over the reporting period	2P-Student-statistics-2010-2020-AIKA-IKZ.png	2P-Studentu-statistika-2010-2020-AIKA-IKZ.xlsx
III. Description of the Study Programme - 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof		
Compliance of the study programme with the State Education Standard	24P-MSJ_compliance with a standard_15122020.docx	24P-MSZ_atbilstiba valsts standartam_15122020.docx
Compliance of the qualification to be acquired upon completion of the study programme with the professional standard (if applicable)	25P-MSJ_compliance with a prof standard_edited-EN.doc	25P-MSZ_atbilstiba profesijas standartam_preciz_LV.doc
Compliance of the study programme with the specific regulatory framework applicable to the relevant field (if applicable)		
Mapping of the study courses/ modules for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study programme	23P-MSJ-mapping of study courses_03122020-EN.xlsx	23P-MSZ_studiju kursu kartejums_precizejums_03122020.xlsx
Curriculum of the study programme (for each type and form of the implementation of the study programme)	26P-MSZ_implementation plan-edited_03122020.docx	26P-MSZ_istenosanas plans_precizejums_03122020.docx
Descriptions of the study courses/ modules	27P-MSJ_Study course descriptions-edited-15122020.zip	27P-MSZ_kursa apraksti_precizejums-15122020.zip
Description of the Study Direction - Other mandatory attachments		
Sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme.	29P-Sample-of-diploma-MSJ.zip	29P-Diploma-paraugs-MSZ.zip
Description of the Study Programme - Other mandatory attachments		
Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued	LiepU-VIA-Cooperation-agreement-WORKING-TRANSLATION.doc	LiepU-VIA-sadarbiba-par-studiju-turpinasanu-MSZ-KSA-2011APR.pdf
Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme	28P-Study-agreement-sample-MSJ.docx	28P-Studiju-liguma-paraugs-MSZ.docx
Confirmation of the higher education institution/ college that the teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language according to European language levels (see the levels under www.europass.lv), if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.		
If the study programmes in the study direction subject to the assessment are doctoral study programmes, a confirmation that at least five teaching staff members with doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field or sub-field of science, in which the study programme has intended to award a scientific degree.		
If academic study programmes are implemented within the study direction, a document confirming that the academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the provisions set out in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause three of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education		
Sample (or samples) of the study agreement	28P-Study-agreement-sample-MSJ.docx	28P-Studiju-liguma-paraugs-MSZ.docx
If academic study programmes for less than 250 full-time students are implemented within the study direction, the opinion of the Council for Higher Education shall be attached in compliance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.		

Media and Information Literacy

Title of the higher education institution	<i>Information and Communication Sciences</i>
ProcedureStudyProgram.Name	<i>Media and Information Literacy</i>
Education classification code	<i>45321</i>
Type of the study programme	<i>Academic master study programme</i>
Name of the study programme director	<i>Agnese</i>
Surname of the study programme director	<i>Dāvidsone</i>
E-mail of the study programme director	<i>agnese.davidsonsone@va.lv</i>
Title of the study programme director	<i>PhD</i>
Phone of the study programme director	<i>26603344</i>
Goal of the study programme	<i>The study programme "Media and Information Literacy" is developed with a purpose to provide internationally competitive education in communication science with an emphasis on media and information literacy in the digital environment, as well as to train highly educated professionals for the work in a variety of fields related to media content production and distribution, analysis, and media education promotion. In accordance with the State standard for academic education, the study programme content is developed to provide a set of knowledge, skills and competences in accordance with Level 7 knowledge, skills and competences specified in the Framework of the Classification of the Latvian Education. The study programme content is developed to provide students with in-depth theoretical knowledge and research skills to develop a successful professional career, as well as to pursue doctoral studies.</i>

<p>Tasks of the study programme</p>	<p><i>To implement the programme, the following objectives are set:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>- To study in-depth theories of communication science in the context of current theories of other social sciences and humanities, thus contributing to the development of interdisciplinary higher education content offer;</i> <i>- To develop critical thinking, information analysis and argumentation skills, as well as to perfect self-reflection skills, thereby strengthening student resistance against implementation of political and commercial interests through media content production and distribution methods which are based on various information manipulation techniques, as well as to promote and multiply those skills in society;</i> <i>- To develop research and analytical skills and to involve students in media research projects, thus preparing them for independent research work for professional needs in corresponding fields of professional activity, as well as for further studies at doctoral level;</i> <i>- To acquire specialized knowledge of the fundamentals of traditional and new media content production and distribution, media operation logic and legal framework, in combination with skills of producing and communicating content suitable to different platforms, and complying with the fundamentals of different information presentation genres and media aesthetics;</i> <i>- To develop ethical and responsible communication skills;</i> <i>- To adapt and develop innovative study methods - strategic games, simulations, etc. - in the field of communication science, integrating theoretical knowledge and practical application of the knowledge for the purpose of solving a variety of societal media literacy problems in a changing and unpredictable environment, providing students with a possibility to develop their creativity and collaborative skills, as well as providing students with the skills to multiply the knowledge acquired after graduation;</i> <i>- To develop and update high quality study content according to theoretical, research and methodological innovations in communication science and dynamics of societal, cultural and political context.</i>
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<p>Results of the study programme</p>	<p>According to the LQF framework, the following study outcomes are determined for the programme:</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge of the most important current media theories; - Understanding of how media reflect different social groups, processes, and values; - Understanding of the functions and role of the media in the development of democratic society; - Understanding of the role of the media in the transformation of society, the mediation of important processes in society, and the fragmentation of audiences; - Knowledge of the main stages of media development history; - Knowledge of the diversity of media systems; - Knowledge of issues related to traditional and online media economics, media business strategies, media management; - Understanding of the development of civil society and participation, the role of the digital media in civic engagement; - Knowledge of the key issues of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, regulatory framework for the media environment, online personal data protection; - Knowledge of the key aspects of issues related to self-protection from undesirable media influences; - Awareness of the employment opportunities in the field of media. <p>SKILLS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills to critically analyze and assess media content; - Skills to engage independently and within a group in planning, producing and distributing media content to different audiences across different genres and platforms, using a variety of media content producing techniques; - Skills to protect themselves from undesirable content and to understand the role of media in various social, interpersonal interaction processes; - Skills to create ideas for innovative media products; - Skills to apply independently the knowledge acquired during studies in order to conduct research; - Skills to provide arguments and discuss complex communication and related science issues. <p>COMPETENCES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to apply the most important media theories in analysis of problem cases; - Ability to demonstrate knowledge of how media is used in political processes, representation of one's own interests, audience mobilization, formation of political movements; - Ability to demonstrate knowledge of media language, how media language can be adapted to produce and distribute various messages; - Ability to demonstrate knowledge of basic issues of digital media content aesthetics; - Ability to integrate knowledge of different fields in research; - Ability to demonstrate awareness of the ethical responsibility of the researcher; - Ability to demonstrate understanding and ethical responsibility for research outcomes.
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Final examination upon the completion of the study programme	<i>Master's Thesis</i>
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Study programme forms

Full time studies - 1 years, 6 months - latvian

Study type and form	<i>Full time studies</i>
Duration in full years	<i>1</i>
Duration in month	<i>6</i>
Language	<i>latvian</i>
Amount (CP)	<i>60</i>
Admission requirements (in English)	<i>Professional bachelor's degree or equivalent higher education</i>
Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	<i>Master's Degree of Social Sciences in Communication Science</i>
Qualification to be obtained (in english)	

Places of implementation

Place name	City	Address
Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences	VALMIERA	CĒSU IELA 4, VALMIERA, VALMIERAS NOVADS, LV-4201

Full time studies - 1 years, 6 months - english

Study type and form	<i>Full time studies</i>
Duration in full years	<i>1</i>
Duration in month	<i>6</i>
Language	<i>english</i>
Amount (CP)	<i>60</i>
Admission requirements (in English)	<i>Professional bachelor's degree or equivalent higher education</i>
Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	<i>Master's Degree of Social Sciences in Communication Science</i>
Qualification to be obtained (in english)	

Places of implementation

Place name	City	Address
Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences	VALMIERA	CĒSU IELA 4, VALMIERA, VALMIERAS NOVADS, LV-4201

Full time studies - 2 years - latvian

Study type and form	<i>Full time studies</i>
Duration in full years	<i>2</i>
Duration in month	<i>0</i>
Language	<i>latvian</i>
Amount (CP)	<i>80</i>
Admission requirements (in English)	<i>Academic bachelor's degree or equivalent higher education</i>

Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	<i>Master's Degree of Social Sciences in Communication Science</i>
Qualification to be obtained (in english)	

Places of implementation

Place name	City	Address
Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences	VALMIERA	CĒSU IELA 4, VALMIERA, VALMIERAS NOVADS, LV-4201

Full time studies - 2 years - english

Study type and form	<i>Full time studies</i>
Duration in full years	<i>2</i>
Duration in month	<i>0</i>
Language	<i>english</i>
Amount (CP)	<i>80</i>
Admission requirements (in English)	<i>Professional bachelor's degree or equivalent higher education</i>
Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	<i>Master's Degree of Social Sciences in Communication Science</i>
Qualification to be obtained (in english)	

Places of implementation

Place name	City	Address
Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences	VALMIERA	CĒSU IELA 4, VALMIERA, VALMIERAS NOVADS, LV-4201

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

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

This study program was licensed during the accreditation period. The main changes are the reduction of the amount of study practice from six to two credits, taking into account that students saw it as an obstacle to the possibilities to combine studies and work. The study courses have also been merged, introducing more courses with a larger amount of credit points in the program, which reduced the fragmentation of the program. This was done in accordance with the recommendations of licensing experts, as well as in accordance with student feedback and evaluation, which was organized by the director of the study program after each study semester. Furthermore, in accordance with the recommendations of experts, the examination forms in the descriptions of study courses have been specified. The admission rules now specify also the language level required of foreign applicants.

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

Refer to the annex for the overview of the number of students of the study programme (*see Annex 2*), we are not making an assessment at this moment, as the first students were admitted to the study programme in 2018. A total of 26 students have been enrolled so far.

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

During the process of preparation of the study programme, a description of the study programme is developed, and the analysis of the interconnection between the study programme objectives and the planned outcomes is made in order to ensure mutual coherence of objectives and outcomes which is further used for the mapping of the study courses. Relevance and coherence between the study programme outcomes and the results of specific study courses are assessed several times during the development process of the study programme content: upon preparing the study programme for licensing - at the meetings of the study direction council, and also during

discussions among the director of the study direction and individual lecturers on the content of study courses and their outcomes. In this way, a high degree of interconnection between the study programme outcomes and the results of specific study courses is achieved. In the future, after implementation of the first cycle of the study programme, it is necessary to return to the issue of interconnection by analyzing student feedback on courses, and meeting students at the end of each semester, also by discussing the study programme content in the ICS study direction council and in the professional advisory council established in the study direction, as well as by individual discussions with lecturers. Admission requirements to this programme: Professional or academic Bachelor's degree or equivalent higher education. Such requirements provide opportunities for a wide range of students to apply for studies. A mandatory requirement for admission is a thesis application (there is a specific form for this purpose) and an interview with each applicant, which provides for a possibility to understand research interests, experience and expectations of potential students regarding the study process and its outcomes.

Admission requirements for applicants are laid down in the *ViA Admission Regulations for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Study Programmes*, which, in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, are approved by November 1 of the current year and published on the [ViA website](#).

In order to start studies, it is required to have at least professional Bachelor's degree or equivalent higher education (60 CP programme) or academic Bachelor's degree or equivalent higher education (80 CP programme).

Upon applying for studies, an applicant should submit educational documents, CV, Master's thesis topic application and a document confirming English language proficiency (English language proficiency certificate or a language proficiency document issued by an international testing institution during the last five years certifying compliance with at least Level B2. If the previous education was acquired in English, proof of English proficiency is not required).

The admission competition is based on the result of the entrance examination (interview), which consists of the following criteria: Master's thesis application - 40%; knowledge of English - 10%; motivation for studies - 20%; weighted average mark in the diploma supplement - 30%.

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

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

Upon developing the study programme content, several data sources were taken into consideration. First of all, the study programme is developed in cooperation with the industry experts of Latvia, with whom several face-to-face meetings were held in 2017 to discuss the

intended content, learning outcomes and the methodology for programme implementation. The last meeting was held shortly before applying for a license on 20 January 2018. Klinta Ločmele, an expert of the Media Policy Division of the Ministry of Culture, also participated in this meeting. During the preparation of the study programme, the Ministry of Culture as the coordinator of the media policy provided an independent expert opinion, which supported the development of the programme and made proposals regarding the programme content, which are included in the final version of this report. Recommendations of the Ministry of Culture are incorporated in the formulation of the study programme objectives. Therefore, one of the objectives of the study programme is to strengthen not only students' critical thinking, information analysis and argumentation skills, but also their skills to popularize media literacy and multiply the knowledge acquired during the studies in society, thus contributing to resistance of different community groups against the implementation of political and commercial interests in the media environment.

The study programme content was developed by analyzing similar study programmes in Denmark and the United Kingdom, as well as based on the recommendations on media and information literacy content provided by the organizations recognized in Europe and the world (UNESCO, EAVI, European Commission).

A part of the study programme content was approbated in the intensive summer schools "Media Literacy and Democracy" in 2017 and 2018 in cooperation with Riga Stradiņš University and the lecturers and students of the University of Minnesota (USA).

During the development of the programme content several international publications were analyzed, for example:

-Buckingham, D. (2007). *Media Education*. London: Polity Press.;

-Celot, P. (Ed.) (2014). *Media Literacy. European Policy Recommendations. EAVI's version*. Brussels: EAVI.;

-*European Parliament Resolution of 16 December 2008 on Media Literacy in a Digital World (2008/2129(INI))*. Strasbourg, 16 December 2008. [http://goo.gl/nQprtx\(01-01-2015\)https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2008/2129\(INI\);](http://goo.gl/nQprtx(01-01-2015)https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2008/2129(INI);)

-Frau-Meigs, D. (Ed.) (2006). *Media Education. A Kit for Teachers, Students, Parents and Professionals*. Paris: UNESCO.;

-Calvo Grizzle, A., & Torras Calvo, M.C. (Eds.) (2013). *Media and Information literacy. Policy & strategy guidelines*. Paris: UNESCO.;

-Grizzle, A., & Wilson, C. (Eds.) (2011). *Media and Information Literacy. Curriculum for Teachers*. Paris: UNESCO.;

Hartai, L. et al. (2014). *Formal Media Education in Europe*. Barcelona, Gabinet de Comunicació y Educación.

UAB.;

Hobbs, R. (2010). *Digital and Media Literacy: A plan of Action*. Washington: The Aspen Institute.

Criteria developed in this study were used to formulate study outcomes: Fedorov, A., Leviskaya, A., Camarero, E., (2016). *Curricula for Media Literacy Education According to International Experts*. European Journal of Contemporary Education, 17(3).

In total, 15 criteria for the study programme content were formulated, and study courses were planned accordingly. The relevance of the criteria and study courses is shown in *table 11* below.

Table 11. *Relevance of criteria and study courses*

No.	Elements of the education content in accordance with the international recommendations	Learning outcomes at the level of the higher education institutions[1]	Relevant courses in the study programme “Media and Information Literacy”
1	Media theories	Students know the most important current media theories, are able to apply media theories in problem case analysis	Communication theory
2	Media and representation	Students understand how media reflect different social groups, processes, values	Communication theory Influential communication
3	Media functions and role in democratic society	Students understand media functions and role in the development of democratic society	Communication theory Culture, society and digital media
4	Social aspects of media	Students understand the role of the media in the transformation of society, how important processes in society are mediated, and how the fragmentation of audiences takes place.	Culture, society and digital media Communication theory Psychological aspects of the online environment Audience studies
5	Political aspects of media	Students demonstrate knowledge of how media is used in political processes, representation of one’s own interests, audience mobilization, and development process of political movements	Influential communication Culture, society and digital media
6	Media and history of media culture	Students know the main stages of media development history	Culture, society and digital media Communication theory Visual culture and semiotics
7	Media language	Students demonstrate knowledge of media language, how media language can be adapted to produce and distribute various messages. They are able to critically analyze and assess media content.	Argumentation theory and critical thinking Influential communication
8	Media aesthetics	Students demonstrate knowledge of basic issues of digital media content aesthetics	Visual culture and semiotics
9	Media and communication ethics	Students are familiar with the problem issues related to media ethics	Communication ethics
10	Media production, content creation	Students demonstrate skills in media content planning, producing and distributing to diverse audiences across different genres and platforms, using a variety of media content creation techniques.	Basics of transmedia storytelling Data visualization
11	Media environment and media systems	Students are familiar with diverse media systems	Media management and online economics
12	Economic aspects of media	Students know issues related to traditional and online media economics, media business strategies, media management	Media management and online economics

13	Media rights, audience rights and obligations	Students are familiar with key problem issues related to freedom of expression, freedom of the press, regulatory framework for the media environment, online personal data protection	Communication and media rights
14	Self-protection from unwanted media influences, protection of information	Students are familiar with the main aspects of problems related to self-protection from undesirable media influences. They are able to protect themselves from unwanted content and understand the role of media in different social and interpersonal interaction processes.	Social cognition and behaviour Socio-psychological aspects of the online environment Smart technologies and data security
15	Creative industries, media as business	Students are familiar with employment opportunities in the field of media and are able to create ideas for innovative media products	Project management and innovations in creative industries

[1] Criteria developed in this study were used to formulate study outcomes: Fedorov, A., Leviskaya, A., Camarero, E., (2016). Curricula for Media Literacy Education According to International Experts. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 17(3).

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

Information included in the study courses and the results to be achieved are reviewed every year, the lecturers take into account both tendencies of the field and feedback given by the students regarding the study courses, and the literature used for studies is supplemented every year. During preparation of the self-assessment report, formulations of the study programme goals regarding the study content, as well as the methods used in the study process were reviewed and updated as necessary, taking into account also the first year experience of the study programme implementation. The scope of the study courses was also adjusted – certain study courses were combined – this was done in accordance with the suggestions of the licensing experts and taking into account student feedback after the 1st study year. In addition to the original courses, the following courses were also included in the study content: “Civil Society and Participation” and “Smart Technologies and Data Security”, taking into account the importance of these topics. Based on the analysis, the study course outcomes were mapped, thus verifying the compliance of each individual course with the goals and objectives set in the study programme. Mapping of the MIL study programme courses is added in the *annex* to the report, showing how individual study courses contribute to the achievement of the study programme outcomes.

Refer to the annex for the mapping of the MIL study programme courses for the achievement of study outcomes (see Annex 37).

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

The study programme is implemented by help of various study forms – lectures, seminars, discussions, practical classes, use of on-line resources, social simulations, role plays, literature studies, applied games, individual and group consultations, study visits, case studies, analysis of audio and video materials, development of student practical work (individual and group-work), fieldwork, visualization, academic posters, multimedia presentations, skype conferences. Advanced information technologies are widely used in the study process. During lectures, lecturers and students have an opportunity to use computer classrooms, multimedia laboratory, as well as the modern TV studio made anew in 2017. During the study process, opportunities provided by the intranet are actively used: moodle.va.lv – it is an electronic study environment, where necessary study materials and lecture presentations of each study course are stored, information is exchanged, where students post their presentations and homework; it is used also as ViA electronic repository of documents; intranet message repository; email, skype, social media. A student has to acquire an average of 50-100 pages of scientific text per credit. No less than two individual papers should be written in each study course, as well as examinations have to be taken. At the end of the course, each student should take a written or oral examination or a test, or submit a larger presentation demonstrating the knowledge acquired during the course. Such a diverse range of study methods and technological tools ensures high quality studies – students acquire and perfect both academic knowledge and practical application skills already in the course of the studies. In this way, a diverse, attractive and engaging study process is ensured providing also authentic experience (simulation games, role-plays), opportunities to develop portfolios useful for further career (multimedia projects, written, visual communication projects), as a result students are well prepared for professional activity in the field of communication.

The following forms of work are used to enhance the dialogue with students: studies in small groups, which promote student involvement in the study process; application of interactive study methods; assessment of independent and research papers and their discussion with the authors; annual projects, peer review and public defence; consultations; cumulative assessment system; student surveys about the study course. Individual communication between a lecturer and a student (outside lectures, seminars and classes) is possible through individual consultations with the lecturer, as well as via e-mail and skype.

For more information on assessment methods and adherence to the principles of student-centred education, see *Part II section 1.6 of the self-assessment report*.

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

Internship is a part of the study process and its goal is to provide the students of the Master's programme "Media and Information Literacy" with a possibility to approbate and perfect their knowledge and skills acquired during their studies and to prepare for their Master's thesis and further career in the chosen field. The duration of internship is 2 or 22 weeks (2 or 22 credit points, respectively), depending on the previous education (in accordance with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions).

The Internship Regulations, forms of internship report and journal, as well as a sample of the internship programme form are added in the *Annex 20*.

The amount of internship is 80 hours (2 credit points), and students do internship during the 2nd semester. Students choose their internship place in accordance with the specificity of the Master's thesis topic, harmonizing it with the director of the ICS study direction and the Master's thesis supervisor (if the supervisor is already appointed).

During preparation of the study programme, cooperation agreements are entered into with a number of organizations that are committed to providing students with internship possibilities. A list of agreements is added in the annex.

Duties of a student during internship:

1. To complete the internship programme,
2. To meet with the internship contact person on a regular basis to analyze internship progress,
3. At the end of internship, to present and defend publicly the work performed during internship.

During internship, a student prepares a report on the work done in the organization. This report is prepared in accordance with the internship programme developed by the student and submitted to the director of the study programme prior to internship, as well as in accordance with the conditions agreed between the student and internship coordinator at the beginning of internship, and internship report requirements. During the development of the internship programme, the student consults with the programme director and/or supervisor of the Master's thesis (if the supervisor is already appointed) regarding the programme content. The internship programme provides information on the following: the goal of internship, its interrelation with the chosen topic of the Master's thesis, tasks planned during internship, the chosen internship organization (or organizations), expected internship results and quality requirements set for them.

Internship is failed if:

1. Negative feedback on student's behaviour and negative and superficial attitude is received;
2. During internship defence, a student is not able to give an adequate report of the work done and the usefulness of internship, as well as its relation to the Master's thesis
3. Internship tasks are not performed or their quality does not comply with the requirements

Internships for foreign students are provided through the Erasmus + study program - in this way the internship was implemented by the only foreign student enrolled in the study program so far. The study program also includes a cooperation agreement with a number of organizations (Latvian National Library, Baltic Media Excellence Center, etc.), which have a wide range of international partners - in the future it is possible to organize internship opportunities in cooperation with these organizations.

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

In the spring of 2020, the first master's theses were defended in the study program. Topics: "The role of the media literacy program in the development of media literacy for secondary school students", "The role of librarians in promoting media literacy and civic participation", "Characterization of media literacy in the project" My Community 2020 ", " Youth as a potential media audience", and "More effective use of virtual reality solutions for online shopping promotion".

The evaluation of the topics was provided by the Master's Thesis Defense Commission, stressing that the works reflect trends in the media environment, correspond to the specifics of the study program, as well as contribute to media literacy research in Latvia, especially for seniors as media users and also the media literacy promoters (librarians) and their role and challenges. On the basis of the results of one master's thesis, in 2020 an academic publication is developed on the role of librarians in promoting media literacy.

The master thesis received grades 7 and 8, except for one paper which received 5. Since it was only the first year when the master thesis were defended, it is not possible to analyse the grade in dynamics, but in the future we plan to do such analysis.

Refer to the annex for the informative overview on the compliance of the MIL study programme with the State education standard (see Annex 38).

Refer to the annex for the plan of the MIL study programme (see Annex 39).

Refer to the annex for the descriptions of the study courses of the MIL study programme (see Annex 40).

Refer to the annex for a sample study agreement of the MIL study programme (see Annex 41).

Refer to the annex for a sample of the MIL study programme diploma and its supplement (see Annex 42)

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

Since the launching of the study programme, the director of the study direction has met with the students every semester to discuss student experience and to hear suggestions for the improvement of the study programme content. As the number of students is relatively small, it is not useful to organize a survey, instead data is collected in a focus group. Based on student feedback, a number of changes have been made to the study programme – several courses with similar content have been merged, for example, courses “Media theories” and “Media effects” are combined in the course “Communication theory”, as well as courses “Introduction to propaganda and influential communication” and “Influential messaging workshop” are combined in the course “Influential communication”. According to the students' comments and feedback, the amount of internship in the study program was reduced from six to two credits, taking into account the fact

that the majority of students work full time, as well as the curriculum plan regarding the distribution of credit points for semester was changed. The revised plan, as annexed to the accreditation report, provides that a master's thesis of 20 credit points is developed and defended in the 3rd or 4th semester. Previously, the development of a Master's thesis was spread over several semesters. The first survey of graduates has also taken place. One of the graduates has become an active promoter of media literacy in the region he represents, regularly organizing classes for students and teachers. The knowledge gained by other graduates has helped them to continue their careers in their workplaces.

When it comes to job opportunities for future graduates, the European Commission has identified media literacy as one of the prerequisites for increasing economic activity and work places in the European Union in the areas such as media, information and communication technologies, digital solutions, etc. A separate programme "Creative Europe" is developed to support the creative industries sector, and the amount of funding channelled to support the creative industries is increasing every year. The creative industry sector is also rapidly developing and stabilizing in Latvia. The demand for communication professionals capable of producing media content in the transmedia environment will only increase. The new study programme "Media and Digital Literacy" provides students with skills and abilities for producing digital content, contributing to the development of the information society. This is particularly important in the context of Vidzeme Planning Region, which has identified the development of new business areas in the knowledge economy sectors as one of the strategic goals of smart specialization in the region. The region has potential for the development of creative industries, including entrepreneurship related to the audiovisual sector, communication, new media solutions. There is a business and innovation incubator operating in Valmiera, where graduates from ViA Information and Communication study direction find opportunities to start their own businesses in the media and communication sector. Graduates have the opportunity to set up their own businesses by creating and delivering innovative information, communication and media services. The education acquired at ICS study programmes provides for opportunities to promote the development of creative economy in Latvia based on intangible resources: knowledge, creative ideas and innovations. Student awareness is raised, and they are educated regarding innovations and entrepreneurship, as well as motivated to focus on entrepreneurship and to develop and further improve innovative ideas and solutions using advanced technologies. In this way, self-employment of the graduates and establishing of new innovative enterprises are enhanced, thus contributing to the development of the national economy and the region, using the knowledge, ideas, experience and contacts acquired during the studies. By encouraging students to develop innovations and creativity, the study direction contributes to the development of Vidzeme region, as well as the national economy of Latvia. Graduates of the programmes implemented in the study direction can successfully engage in entrepreneurship, as well as have good careers in governmental and civil service institutions, municipal authorities, mass media, non-governmental organizations, and other organizations that require a broad range of basic knowledge of social processes, as well as analytical thinking and creativity competencies.

In general, ViA annually summarizes data on graduate employment - the survey is carried out a year after graduation. This is, in a sense, a remarkable indicator that a graduate has already found a job in a profession, however, it would be preferable to carry out surveys over a longer period of time to analyze career dynamics and professional development of graduates in the chosen field. Graduates of the undergraduate programmes of the ICS study direction are rapidly and successfully entering the labour market and working in their profession. This applies to graduates of the undergraduate programmes who are more likely to start a serious career after graduation. As for the graduates of the new programme, it is expected that some of them will already be in the labour market upon starting the studies, thus the overall employment rate after graduation will be high or close to 100%. One of the factors that could be considered as the professional development of

graduates (and, to a large extent, their satisfaction with the education acquired) is the active involvement of graduates in the study process after graduation, which takes various forms – guest lectures, offering research topics and internship, etc.

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

No student mobility has yet been implemented in this study program. Given that all students are predominantly full-time workers, it is very likely that the level of mobility, in the sense of the time spent in a foreign university or internship at a foreign organization, will remain low in the future. ViA actively uses the so-called "internationalization at home", organizing international weeks twice a year, during which ViA visits and teaches foreign lecturers in various study programs. In this way, students can also listen to lectures of foreign lecturers in the Media and Information Literacy program. Part A of the MIL program also includes a study course taught by a professor from the University of Tartu. Students also have the opportunity to participate in ViA Baltic International Summer School (BISS) (the last school in the field of communication took place in 2019, the next one is not scheduled due to the COVID-19 situation, but it is planned that the topic of it will be strategic communication). For participation in BISS students receive a certificate and the obtained credit points are fully transferred to the study program.

See section 5 of Part II of the self-assessment report.

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

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

The resource base available for the implementation of the study program (premises infrastructure, technological support, library collection) is sufficient and appropriate - for this in 2018 a positive assessment was also received from the study program licensing experts. The only problem already mentioned in the descriptions of other study programs is the relatively limited access to academic databases, based on ViA's financial capacity to allocate funds for extensive database subscriptions. The library's book collection is carefully renewed every year to partially compensate this aspect. The financial base is sufficient to pay for the work of academic staff members in order to attract highly qualified academics, as required by the state standard for the implementation of the

academic study program.

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 and the consequent shift to online studies fully demonstrated that ViA is ready to adapt to the changing situation and that the infrastructure base is fully adapted to it. From the first day of online studies in March 2020, classes take place on the webex platform, moodle system and e-mail system fully support the exchange of information, notification of news, notification of changes between lecturers and students.

Information on the resources of the study program and its provision is available in *Part II, sections 3.1-3.3* of the report.

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

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

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

In 2019, a total of 15 lecturers participate in the implementation of the study program, 13 of them have been elected. There have been no significant changes in the composition of the academic staff members involved in the implementation of the program, taking into account that the program has been operating for only 2 years.

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

The implementation of the study programme was started in 2018. Upon developing the study programme, the lecturers involved were selected on the basis of the following criteria: the direction of research and topics of previous research, competence acquired in academic work (preparation of study courses) and knowledge related to the programme content, scientific degree and qualification. A prerequisite for election to academic position is a doctoral degree or a status of doctoral candidate during the programme licensing period (with the exception of specific courses

such as “Environmental Management and Protection” and “Labour Protection”), doctoral studies at later study stages, and English language proficiency at least B2 level, considering that the study programme will be implemented in both Latvian and English. Most of the elected lecturers involved in the implementation of the study programme have been participating in the implementation of ViA Media Literacy Initiative since 2016, which has three directions of activity: improvement of formal education content at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, development of lifelong learning content for different social groups, as well as deconstruction of media content and media criticism. Participation in Media Literacy Initiative activities has ensured that lecturers have engaged in active scientific and academic activities in such areas as media literacy, information literacy, audience research, social cognitive process and individual behaviour research, research on propaganda history, analysis of contemporary propaganda techniques, and analysis of influential messages, as well as research on online relationships between individuals, various socio-psychological aspects of the online environment, the role of culture in communication, visual culture and semiotics, transmedia storytelling, and media management and media environment research, and media ethics and media law research. Selection of guest lecturers is based on the direction of scientific activities and international recognition in the field of media and communication science, as well as practical work experience, as in the case of the course “Media law”, where Dr. iur. Rihards Gulbis is attracted as a guest lecturer – he has long-term experience in the field of copyright, including experience in working as a scientific analytical advisor to the Supreme Court.

In 2018-2019, a part of ViA elected lecturers is improving their foreign language skills by participating in the English language training sessions within the framework of the ESF project “Development of Academic Staff and Human Resources of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences” (SAM 8.2.2)”.

Four of the lecturers – J. Buholcs, A. Dāvidsone, G. Krūmiņš, V. Silkāne – have a status of the expert of the Latvian Council of Science.

In general, the qualification of academic staff members, their involvement in scientific work, knowledge of foreign languages and other parameters meet the requirements set for the implementation of the academic study program, including in English.

Information on the involvement of academic staff in scientific research, both nationally and internationally, is available in *Part II section 4.4* of the report.

4.3. Information on the number of the scientific publications of the academic staff members, involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme, as published during the reporting period by listing the most significant publications published in Scopus or WoS CC indexed journals. As for the social sciences, humanitarian sciences, and the science of art, the scientific publications published in ERIH+ indexed journals may be additionally specified (if applicable).

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

on the reporting period (if applicable).

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

At the end of 2018, ViA attracted funds from the National Research Program for the implementation of the three-year project "Values in Action: Development of a Responsible, Safe and Educated Civil Society through Research and Development of Action Models", in which both PhD researchers and four ViA master students, as well as several ViA lecturers who have started or continue their doctoral studies. In 2017-2019, the researchers employed in the study direction implemented the project "Involvement of Mass Media in Integration of Third-Country Nationals in Latvia" supported by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), in which recommendations were developed for the development of a code of media ethics in Latvia, as well as a model for media editorial guidelines. In 2019, together with RSU, an application was submitted to the AMIF for the second round of projects, funding was obtained, but unfortunately in the autumn of 2020 the project had to be closed due to problems caused by COVID-19, as it was not possible to implement all planned activities. All of these projects have included some aspect of media literacy research, as well as media ethics issues in AMIF projects. In 2019 and 2020, researchers from the study direction also implemented two targeted studies funded by Valmiera City Municipality in connection with the forthcoming administrative-territorial reform. In 2020, ViA participated in the RSU-led National Research Program project "Life with Covid-19: Assessment of Overcoming the Coronavirus Crisis in Latvia and Proposals for the Future of Public Sustainability (COVID Life)". All projects have obtained different results related to the topics of the courses taught in the study program: media and information literacy, media ethics, influential communication, civil society, participation, and they are respectively integrated into the content of study courses. Based on the results obtained in the project "Values in Action ...", a completely new study course "Civil Society and Participation" has been created, which has been taught since 2019.

Additional information is available in *Part II, Section 4.4* of the report.

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

Upon planning and implementing study courses, lecturers pay attention to planning student individual and group work in such formats that would allow students to perfect or test the knowledge acquired through practical tasks - social simulation and strategic games - involving students from several study programmes, and the content of the task is jointly developed by the

lecturers of several study courses. In this way, knowledge acquisition and approbation in an integrated way is enhanced. Experience gained during the simulation is analyzed from different perspectives within several study courses. This approach is in line with the general tendency regarding acquisition of communication science at the higher education institutions in Europe - to offer an integrated approach to the training of young professionals that addresses thinking, process management and operational activity level. Such an approach is also possible, if, during the implementation of the study courses, elected lecturers cooperate with the guest lecturers - professionals of the field, who create the content of the integrated tasks according to the latest development tendencies. In this way, a good balance is achieved between the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and its approbation, as well as current issues are integrated in the study process.

11 lecturers are involved in the implementation of the study program, which currently forms the ratio of 11 lecturers to 16 students (1.5 students per lecturer).

Annexes

III. Description of the Study Programme - 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme		
Compliance of the joint study programme with the provisions of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (table)		
Statistics on the students over the reporting period	2P-Student-statistics-2010-2020-AIKA-IKZ.png	2P-Studentu-statistika-2010-2020-AIKA-IKZ.xlsx
III. Description of the Study Programme - 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof		
Compliance of the study programme with the State Education Standard	38P-MIL_compliance with the ctandard-edited-EN.docx	38P-MIP_atbilstiba valsts standartam_preciz-LV.docx
Compliance of the qualification to be acquired upon completion of the study programme with the professional standard (if applicable)		
Compliance of the study programme with the specific regulatory framework applicable to the relevant field (if applicable)		
Mapping of the study courses/ modules for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study programme	37P-MIP_mapping_edited_15122020.xlsx	37P-MIL_kartejums_precizejums_15122020.xlsx
Curriculum of the study programme (for each type and form of the implementation of the study programme)	39P-MIL_Implementation plan_edited_15122020.docx	39P-MIP_istenosanas plans_prec_15122020.docx
Descriptions of the study courses/ modules	40P-MIL_course descriptions_2019.zip	40P-MIP_kursa apraksti_2019.zip
Description of the Study Direction - Other mandatory attachments		
Sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme.	42P-Sample-of-diploma-MIL.zip	42P-Diploma-paraugs-MIP.zip
Description of the Study Programme - Other mandatory attachments		
Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued	RSU_MIL-ViA-Cooperation-agreement-WORKING-TRANSLATION.doc	Ligums ar RSU_MIP.pdf
Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme	41P-Study-agreement-sample-MIL.docx	41P-Studiju-liguma-paraugs-MIP.docx
Confirmation of the higher education institution/ college that the teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language according to European language levels (see the levels under www.europass.lv), if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.	Apliecinajums-MIP-SKP-anglu-valoda.edoc	Apliecinajums-MIP-SKP-anglu-valoda.edoc
If the study programmes in the study direction subject to the assessment are doctoral study programmes, a confirmation that at least five teaching staff members with doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field or sub-field of science, in which the study programme has intended to award a scientific degree.		
If academic study programmes are implemented within the study direction, a document confirming that the academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the provisions set out in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause three of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education	Apliecinajums-MIP-SKP-AL.55.pants-Latvian-only.zip	Apliecinajums-MIP-SKP-AL.55.pants-Latvian-only.zip
Sample (or samples) of the study agreement	41P-Study-agreement-sample-MIL.docx	41P-Studiju-liguma-paraugs-MIP.docx
If academic study programmes for less than 250 full-time students are implemented within the study direction, the opinion of the Council for Higher Education shall be attached in compliance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.	CHE-MIL-ViA-opinion-WORKING-TRANSLATION.doc	AIP atzinums_MIP.pdf

Communication and Public Relations

Title of the higher education institution	<i>Information and Communication Sciences</i>
ProcedureStudyProgram.Name	<i>Communication and Public Relations</i>
Education classification code	<i>42321</i>
Type of the study programme	<i>Professional bachelor study programme</i>
Name of the study programme director	<i>Agnese</i>
Surname of the study programme director	<i>Dāvidsone</i>
E-mail of the study programme director	<i>agnese.davidsone@va.lv</i>
Title of the study programme director	<i>PhD</i>
Phone of the study programme director	<i>26603344</i>
Goal of the study programme	<i>The goal of the study programme is to train well-educated, highly qualified, competent and competitive communication and public relations managers. Graduates of the programme will be able to successfully develop and manage strategic communication in today's complex and global environment, based on the knowledge and professional skills acquired. Studies develop research skills and critical thinking, the ability to persuade in an ethical way, creativity, skills to develop innovations, decision-making and problem-solving skills. During the studies, attention is paid to information acquisition, selection, analysis and distribution skills. The study programme provides a wide range of practical knowledge that can be applied in a variety of disciplines, helping build a successful career, develop the ability to adapt to the labour market tendencies and succeed in a rapidly changing environment.</i>

<p>Tasks of the study programme</p>	<p><i>To implement the programme, the following objectives are set:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>- To acquire communication science theory, basic theories of sociology, social psychology, theoretical framework and practical skills of communication ethics, argumentation and persuasion;</i> <i>- To develop critical thinking, information analysis and argumentation skills, as well as to perfect self-reflection skills, preparing students for both professional and lifelong learning;</i> <i>- To acquire methods of social science research and to apply them practically in research;</i> <i>- To provide in-depth knowledge of public relations, marketing, advertising, changes in the media environment, to acquire skills to work with integrated communication methods, to work with organizations, stakeholders;</i> <i>- To acquire specialized knowledge of the fundamentals of traditional and new media content production and distribution, media operation logic and legal framework, along with the skills to produce and communicate content suitable for different platforms, complying with the fundamentals of different information communication genres and media aesthetics;</i> <i>- To develop creative thinking, cooperation, leadership and other multiskill abilities;</i> <i>- To acquire academic knowledge and research skills for postgraduate studies;</i> <i>- To develop and update a high-quality study content in accordance with theoretical, research and methodological innovations in communication science and dynamics of societal, cultural and political context;</i> <i>- To diversify the methods used in the study process, to implement pedagogical innovations, to improve lecturers' teaching skills to prepare students for the work in a dynamic and complex labour environment.</i>
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Results of the study programme	<p><i>The goal of the study programme is to provide a possibility to acquire the following knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes:</i></p> <p>KNOWLEDGE <i>Knowledge of the Latvian and world's economic and political processes; industry processes; knowledge of management and decision-making methods; theoretical knowledge and skills of public relations, knowledge of organizational communication processes, innovation development.</i></p> <p>SKILLS <i>Skills to form and manage teamwork; to plan and organize effectively one's own work; to motivate; to organize and conduct applied research; to use advanced information and communication technologies; to prepare and deliver presentations (including using multimedia); to plan and manage communication with the internal and external audience of the organization and with the parties of influence; to comply with legal requirements, business ethics and public relations codes of ethics.</i></p> <p>COMPETENCES <i>Management and analysis of communication processes; conducting of negotiations; persuasion; text writing and editing; concept development for print media, audiovisual and interactive media, developing communication on digital media platforms, developing cooperation with outsourcing providers and opinion leaders in the social media environment; analysis of opportunities and risks in the public relations planning; formulation of the strategic message and ensuring its communicative direction; time planning; budget planning; HR planning, management and supervision; usage of persuasion strategies and tactics; information and knowledge management.</i></p> <p><i>The study programme "Communication and Public Relations" enhances improvement of the following attitudes: sense of responsibility, honesty, determination, accuracy, willingness to learn, initiative, ethics, and tolerance.</i></p>
Final examination upon the completion of the study programme	<i>Bachelor's Thesis</i>

Study programme forms

Full time studies - 4 years - latvian

Study type and form	<i>Full time studies</i>
Duration in full years	<i>4</i>
Duration in month	<i>0</i>
Language	<i>latvian</i>
Amount (CP)	<i>160</i>
Admission requirements (in English)	<i>Secondary education</i>
Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	<i>Professional bachelor's degree in communication and public relations</i>
Qualification to be obtained (in english)	<i>Public Relations Manager</i>

Places of implementation

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

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

There have been no significant changes in the main parameters of the study program, except that the name of the professional qualification Latvian has been specified in accordance with the professional standard. In accordance with the recommendations received during the previous evaluation, new study courses ("Creative Writing") have been included. The content of the study program has been evaluated and analyzed after the approval of the new professional standard in the beginning of 2020. The results of the study program and study courses have been mapped, their compliance with the professional standard has been evaluated. The results of the analysis are that no significant changes have been required, except for certain aspects or topics that have been incorporated into the content of existing courses.

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

Statistics on students ([see Annex 2](#)) show a positive tendency - the number of the first-year students admitted to the CPR programme has slightly increased since 2013, despite the demographic situation in the country. This is due to the recognition of both programmes in the country, in particular the good reputation of the CPR programme among employers, as well as due to the generally high interest of high school students in their future career in communication. The ratio of the number of graduates to the admitted students in both study programmes is 70% in the reporting period, which is a good indicator. Upon analyzing drop-out rates, the average rate is 6-8% due to different reasons. Rarely students indicate that studies are terminated due to an inappropriately chosen study programme. Increasingly frequent drop-out reason is inability to combine studies with the work because students' parents can not provide financial support. Unfortunately, more and more students want to terminate their studies due to health problems. In such situations, there is always a possibility to study according to the individual plan, and some of those students do so. Those who resume studies after an academic break also study according to the individual plan. The academic break is mostly used for the purpose of child care. The CPR study programme has comparatively higher rates of students who have dropped out prior to graduation. Often this is due to the fact that a student has shown himself/herself well during internship and received a job offer. Both study programmes of the study direction work individually with each student who is exmatriculated due to academic debt or after completion of a theoretical programme without defending the Bachelor's thesis. These students are contacted regarding resumption possibilities to complete their studies, which many of them use. There are quite a few

cases where the graduation thesis is defended even 4-6 years after the completion of the theoretical course.

Refer to the annex for the overview of the number of students in the study programme (see Annex 2).

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

Throughout the process of preparation of the study programme and also later in the following years, efforts have been made to review the study programme to ensure the compliance of the name of the programme with the degree and the professional qualification to be awarded. In each accreditation period, an in-depth analysis of the interconnection between the programme objectives and the planned outcomes has been carried out in order to ensure interconnection of the objectives and outcomes, and to improve the study programme content in accordance with the development tendencies of the field. Descriptions of the goals and objectives of the study programme have been used to map the study courses. Relevance and coherence between the outcomes of the study programme and the results of specific study courses are assessed annually by preparing a self-assessment report. Information on the progress of the study programme implementation and achievement of the set objectives is assessed also every academic year when meeting with students, at the study direction council meetings, and at the meetings of the study direction lecturers. In this way, coherence between the outcomes of the study programme and the results of the specific study courses is achieved. Admission requirements to the study programme are formulated to attract students who are capable and interested in working in the information and communication environment (results of centralized examinations in Latvian and English), who want to orientate in the events of Latvia and the world, to work with information and communication technologies, to plan and manage their own work, as well as to plan and manage various resources required for professional activities. Taking into account that student research work is also an important component of the study programme, those who have shown good results in pupil research competitions have an advantage in admission.

Admission requirements for applicants are laid down in the *ViA Admission Regulations for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Study Programmes*, which, in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, are approved by November 1 of the current year and published on the [ViA website](#). In order to start studies, it is required to have at least secondary education. There is a mandatory requirement for the admission competition – passed centralized examinations in Latvian, mathematics and in one of the foreign languages. Also, for the purposes of calculation of the competition score, ViA takes into account the marks indicated in the secondary education documents in the following subjects: Latvian, English, mathematics (or algebra and geometry), history of Latvia and world history, as well as information science.

Applicants who got the 2nd and 3rd places in the school subject Olympiads of the Republic of Latvia (during the last 2 years), the 1st degree laureates of the Latvian pupils' research conferences (during the last 2 years) in the following sections: Latvian linguistics, psychology, sociology, political science, economics, or who have participated in ViA School of Media Literacy, have a possibility to get additional points to their score in the admission competition.

Besides, the 1st place winners in the school subject Olympiads of the Republic of Latvia and the 1st - 3rd place winners in international subject Olympiads (during the last 2 years), and the 1st place winner in Vidzeme region Junior Achievement Latvia competition "Best in Economics", the laureate of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, according to ViA Admission Regulations, shall be admitted to the CPR programme outside the competition.

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

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

Every year the study programme is improved based on the student and employer recommendations. Taking into account the rapid changes in the communication environment and consultations with both employers and students, during the last accreditation period the following new study courses were included in the study programme: "Visual Communication Systems", "Digital Marketing", "Entrepreneurship in Creative Industries", since academic year of 2018-2019 a course "Sports Marketing" is also included in the study programme. The idea of this course came from Valmiera City local government, taking into account the fact that Valmiera is actively developing sports infrastructure and wants to position itself as the sports capital of Latvia. Taking into account the views of industry professionals, a course called "Argumentation and Critical Thinking" was also included in the study programme. At the end of 2019, the director and several lecturers of the ICS study direction cooperated with the professional associations of the field - Latvian Public Relations Association and Latvian Communication Association - for the purpose of updating the profession standard "Public Relations Manager". During discussions with the industry professionals, another idea was identified to supplement the study programme content by including the topic of lobbying as a public relations function, which will be implemented starting from the academic year of 2020-2021.

The study program was updated in 2020 in accordance with the new professional standard "Public Relations Manager", which was approved in February 2020.

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

Information included in the study courses and outcomes to be achieved are reviewed every year, the lecturers take into account tendencies of the field and feedback given by the students regarding the study courses, and the literature used for studies is supplemented every year. Upon preparing the self-assessment report, formulations of the study programme goals are also reviewed each year and, where necessary, adjusted with respect to the content of the studies and methods used in the study process, including, where appropriate, information in accordance with the tendencies of the field (e.g., topics about influencer marketing, analysis and involvement of stakeholders replacing one-way communication, etc.). Based on this analysis, results of the study courses are mapped, thus verifying the compliance of each individual course with the goals and objectives set in the study programme. Mapping of the courses of the CPR study programme is added in the annex to the report showing how individual study courses contribute to the achievement of the study programme outcomes.

[Refer to the annex for the mapping of the study courses for achieving the study results of the CPR study programme \(see Annex 30\)](#)

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

The study programme is implemented by help of various study forms – lectures, seminars, discussions, practical classes, use of on-line resources, social simulations, role plays, literature studies, applied games, individual and group consultations, study visits, case studies, analysis of audio and video materials, development of student practical work (individual and group-work), fieldwork, visualization, academic posters, multimedia presentations, skype conferences. Advanced information technologies are widely used in the study process. During lectures, lecturers and students have an opportunity to use computer classrooms, multimedia laboratory, as well as the modern TV studio made anew in 2020. During the study process, opportunities provided by the intranet are actively used: moodle.va.lv – it is an electronic study environment, where necessary study materials and lecture presentations of each study course are stored, information is exchanged, where students post their presentations and homework; it is used also as ViA electronic repository of documents; intranet message repository; email, skype, social media. A student has to acquire an average of 50-100 pages of scientific text per credit. No less than two individual papers should be written in each study course, as well as examinations have to be taken. At the end of the course, each student should take a written or oral examination or a test, or submit a larger presentation demonstrating the knowledge acquired during the course. Such a diverse range of study methods and technological tools ensures high quality studies – students acquire and consolidate both academic knowledge and practical application skills already in the course of the studies. In this way, a diverse, attractive and engaging study process is ensured providing also authentic experience (simulation games, role-plays), opportunities to develop portfolios useful for further career (multimedia projects, written, visual communication projects), as a result students are well prepared for professional activity in the field of communication.

The following forms of work are used to promote the dialogue with students: studies in small groups, which promote student involvement in the study process; application of interactive study methods; assessment of independent and research papers and their discussion with the authors; annual projects, peer review and public defence; consultations; cumulative assessment system; student surveys about the study course. Individual communication between a lecturer and a student (outside lectures, seminars and classes) is possible through individual consultations with the lecturer, as well as via e-mail and skype.

For more information on assessment methods and adherence to the principles of student-centred education, see *Part II section 1.6 of the self-assessment report*.

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

An important part of the study process is annual internship that takes place in cooperation with the communication field. The Internship Regulations are approved in the ICS study direction. In accordance with the Internship Regulations, the 1st year students have internship in journalism in amount of 4 CP in order to understand the operation principles of media and journalism. In the following years students do public relations and PR project management internship in the amount of 6-8 CP each study year. Internship ensures the achievement of planned outcomes of the study programme related to acquisition of practical skills and approbation of theoretical knowledge in practical activity. Internship also facilitates the link between students and the labour market already during their studies, and often students start working for one of their internship providers during their studies. Internship is an important component of both ICS undergraduate programmes, therefore students are also supported in a variety of ways so that the internship experience can be productive and positive. The director and lecturers of the study programme actively communicate with representatives of the field, encouraging them to provide internship possibilities. Taking into account that CPR has a good reputation among professionals of the field, the organizations themselves readily offer internship possibilities. Information on internship possibilities is e-mailed to students. Students apply for an internship place every year by filling in the application form, ViA assigns students for internship, supervises internship and engages in communication with an internship provider, if necessary. Before internship, the student and the supervisor agree on specific tasks to be performed during internship in accordance with the Internship Regulations. Within the framework of internship, students fill in the internship journal, as well as assess experience and knowledge acquired. The internship supervisor also gives his/her assessment in writing. At the end of the internship period, internship is defended. During defence, students present their work, discuss the progress of internship, observations, reflect on their performance, as well as provide feedback on how the knowledge acquired during the studies helped accomplish internship objectives. During internship defence, ideas have been formulated more than once on how to change the course of the study programme (for example, the need to include particular courses in the earlier study stages) and which topics could supplement the content of the study programme. The Internship Regulations and samples of internship documents are added in *Annex 20*. Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences has entered into a number of “umbrella” agreements for the provision of internship – a list of agreements is added in *Annex 18* to the report.

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

The study programme envisages the development of annual projects and Bachelor's theses, which help apply and integrate theoretical and practical knowledge and develop skills and abilities to conduct research. Theses cover a very wide range of topics. Research focuses on issues topical for society in Latvia and in the world, as well as on changes in the communication environment. Research on public health and safety, including internal communication within organizations, is conducted. A lot of theses have been written on the activities in Vidzeme region – various companies, municipal communication have been studied, as well as the role of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences as a provider of education in the region. Some of the topics of the Bachelor's theses written by the CPR students during the period of time since 2013 are given below.

1. Changes and new tendencies in the field of communication:

Integrated marketing communication and its assessment as a company enters a new market – case of “H&M” entering Latvia

Communication development tendencies in Latvia

Mobile marketing in Latvia: Smartphone opportunities in business

Integrated marketing communication in new IT companies in Vidzeme region

Fan movement as a social phenomenon in Latvia: case of the ice-hockey club “Dinamo Riga”

Science communication in Latvia: Vision of the parties involved in public education

Life after “deletion”: Deliberate opting out of social networking sites

Online privacy: Point of view of different age groups

Civic initiatives and their advance on ManaBalss.lv

Use of visual communication elements in the Road Traffic Safety Directorate reflector campaigns

Visual material in environmental communication: Development process and optimal content

Rumor communication in online portals: Example of Riga vice mayor A. Ameriks

The role of weather forecasts in the organization and consumption of seasonal and active tourism services

Analysis of stakeholders in social science projects in Latvia – environmental monitoring

Personal branding for Latvian e-athletes social media communication

The use of Latvian media by Diaspora representatives in Ireland

Responses to “black PR attacks” in political communication in Latvia

2. Assessment of political and economic processes in Latvia and their communication:

Higher education reforms in Latvia: Communication of Roberts Kļiņš, Minister of Education and Science, with the stakeholders

The role of cultural events in the State's image-building process during its presidency of the Council of the European Union

Strategy of commercial banks in rumour management: Case of social networks

Reputation management in crisis communication: Responsibility in crisis situation, analysis of the case of Zolitūde tragedy.

Plan of re-emigration support activities: Views of economic emigrants

Attracting private donations to NGOs of social area

Electronic signature in Latvia: Perspective of implementers' communication

Positioning of political parties and their leaders before the 12th Saeima elections

"Latvenergo" communication with household customers upon starting operation in the circumstances of free market: Analysis of "Elektrum Universal" sales letters

Factors facilitating and hindering remote communication in organizations

Presentation of the Latvian presidency of the Council of the EU in the national print media

Identity of the National Library of Latvia: Interaction of communication employees with collaboration partners

Strategies chosen by municipalities to promote civic involvement: Case study of Pierīga municipalities

3. Public health, safety:

Self-assessment of health literacy and communication environment in the health care system in Latvia from the perspective of cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular patients

The role of information and communication technologies in the work of doctors and communication with patients

Doctor - patient communication barriers in outpatient healthcare: Case of Vidzeme hospital

Population preparedness and awareness of emergency response

The role of the State Emergency Medical Service communication activities in the reduction of secondary calls

Communication between family doctors and parents about vaccination

The role of pushing in the Cervical Cancer Early Detection Programme

Health communication and health behaviour promotion in Latvian companies

Information literacy in mental health: Experiences of patients and relatives

The role of pushing in attracting blood donors

Views, knowledge, and experience related to neonatal vaccination: Content and comment analysis of online forum discussions

Using health communication to raise awareness for schizophrenia in the framework of campaign "Don't Turn Away"

4. Research within Vidzeme region:

Communication of the State Employment Agency Limbaži branch with the youth of Limbaži region regarding involvement in the labour market

Competitiveness of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences as a provider of education services in the view of Vidzeme region entrepreneurs

Consumer attitudes towards foreign investor products

Analysis of study programme internationalization experience at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

Cooperation between Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences and Vidzeme Planning Region municipalities and its development possibilities

Assessment of corporate reputation and its importance for organizational development: Example of LLC "ZAAO"

Use of communication tools by low-income families to receive help in Vidzeme region

Internal migration of Latvian people working in the area related to culture: Case of Vidzeme Region cities

Twitter usage practices in micro-, small- and medium businesses in Valmiera city

Communication agents of financial literacy among active seniors: Case of Valmiera

Specifics of branding in the NGO sector: Case of Valmiera Municipality Foundation

Communication of LLC "Vidzeme Veterinary Services" with customers: Example of Vidzeme livestock breeders

User participation in social media: Example of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

Building relationships between Cēsis Municipality local government and inhabitants as the stakeholders

Personal data breach as a crisis situation: Analysis of small and medium enterprises in Vidzeme region

Readiness of Vidzeme municipalities for crisis management and communication

Research of Vidzeme region local government communication models and population attraction

Attitude and activities of inhabitants in implementing sustainable social entrepreneurship in Sigulda municipality

Internal communication of organizations:

Employee silence in Latvian companies and its challenges for successful employee involvement

Aspects of team training usefulness in the operation of organizations: Case study

Change communication opportunities and restrictions in companies listed in Nasdaq Riga regulated market

Using pushing in promoting healthy lifestyle in Latvian companies

Type of culture in the company M.E.LAT-LUX and communication of its cultural values in internal communication.

CPR graduates attend also meetings of professional associations and present the results of their papers. At the end of 2019, for example, members of LASAP (*Latvian Public Relations Association*) got acquainted with the following papers: "The role of social campaigns involving mothers of 12-17 year old girls in vaccination against human papillomavirus" and "Personal branding for Latvian e-athletes social media communication".

In Latvia, the field of education is often criticized for assessment “inflation”. It is not true regarding the ICS study direction. During the reporting period, the average grade of the final papers in the MSJ and CPR study programmes was between 7 and 7.5. There has been a slight increase in the average grade since 2013 due to the improved student support system for the development of graduation papers – students submit the topics of the papers at the end of the 6th semester, while in the 7th semester there is the study course “Research Internship”, during which students prepare and defend the introduction and the literature review of their papers. In the middle of the 8th semester, there is a pre-defence of the final paper, during which students present the data collected and the first conclusions from the data analysis. This ensures development of the final paper in a timely manner and paper development monitoring at the level of the study direction, besides, possible problems are detected earlier, students are more motivated to consult actively with their supervisors in a timely manner, etc. The methodological guidelines for the development of papers were also improved several times during the reporting period – the most recent version was developed in 2019. An overview of the average grades of the graduation papers by years is presented in *Table 10*:

Table 10. Overview of the average grades of the final papers by years

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
CPR	6.5	7,76	6.5	7	6.27	6.42	6.92	6.91

Refer to the annex for the informative overview on the compliance of the CPR study programme with the State education standard (see Annex 31).

Refer to the annex for the informative overview on the compliance of the qualification obtained in the CPR study programme with the profession standard (a sample of the recommended form is in Annex 7) (see Annex 32).

Refer to the annex for the plan of the CPR study programme (see Annex 33).

Refer to the annex for the descriptions of the CPR study programme courses (see Annex 34).

Refer to the annex for the sample study agreement of the CPR study programme (see Annex 35).

Refer to the annex for the sample of the CPR study programme diploma and its supplement (see Annex 36)

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

Qualified communication and media managers and specialists are increasingly in demand in the Latvian labour market. The demand will remain according to the report of the Ministry of Economics on labour market forecasts for the group of professions “senior specialists of legal, social and cultural affairs”, which includes both journalists and communications specialists. Each year professionals who participate in the work of the State Examination Commission confirm the high level of student qualification. Another proof of employment prospects is the employment of graduates. According to ViA graduate survey carried out in spring of 2018, 93.1% of them are

employed. This is the highest indicator since 2010. CPR graduates work in the profession corresponding to their degree and qualification after completing their undergraduate studies. Several continue their education at the Master's level and work at the same time. These data confirm that the study programme meets the requirements of the field, is up-to-date and provides the knowledge, skills and competences necessary in the field. The study programme is improved every year based on student and employer recommendations. Taking into account the rapid changes in the communication environment and consultations with both employers and students, who are at the end of studies, in the defense of the last study practice, questioned about the overall content of the study program and students' assessment of their readiness for the labor market, during the last accreditation period the following new study courses were integrated in the study programme: "Visual Communication Systems", "Digital Marketing", "Entrepreneurship in Creative Industries", while since academic year of 2018-2019 a course "Sports Marketing" is also included in the study programme. The idea of this course came from Valmiera City local government, taking into account the fact that Valmiera is actively developing sports infrastructure and wants to position itself as the sports capital of Latvia. Taking into consideration the views of professionals, a course "Argumentation and Critical Thinking" is also included in the study programme. At the end of 2019, the director and several lecturers of the ICS study direction cooperated with the professional associations of the field - Latvian Public Relations Association and Latvian Communication Association - for the purpose of updating the profession standard "Public Relations Manager". During discussions with the professionals of the field, another idea was identified - to supplement the study programme content by including the topic of lobbying as a public relations function, which will be implemented starting from the academic year of 2020-2021. Based on the comments by graduates, the study course "Creative Writing" was introduced in the study program.

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

During the accreditation period, a total of 41 mobilities have been implemented in the study program, going both to study at a foreign university and on internship. During the accreditation period, we are seeing a gradual decline in the number of mobilities and this is related to the decreasing motivation of students to go outside Latvia, as well as to the reduced amount of funding for students from Latvia. In general, the opportunities for mobility in the study program are abundant, the list of partner universities is updated and reviewed every year, and new agreements are concluded periodically. In accordance with the Erasmus Charter and the Tripartite Mobility Agreement, the credits obtained at a foreign university or internship organization, are transferred to ViA credits. Upon returning from exchange studies or internships, the student continues to study at ViA according to an individual plan.

See also Part II sections 5 of the self-assessment report.

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

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

ViA does not separately assess infrastructure by study programs, but resources are assessed for the university as a whole. The resource base available for the implementation of the Communication and PR study program (auditoriums, computer classrooms, laboratory, library resources) is completely sufficient, except for one resource - wider access to academic databases, because in ViA budget situation it is possible to allocate resources to provide basic access, could carry out the research work envisaged in the study program.

An important resource in the implementation of the Communication and PR program is the multimedia laboratory and the TV studio, which was fully completed in 2020. Funds are provided for the renovation of the laboratory and studio every year from the financing of various projects, because it is not possible to do this from the basic budget of ViA. Previously, when licensing both master's study programs, a comment was received from the experts that this is not a desirable situation and a number of risks are evident, but until the country has better addressed the funding of the HEIs from the state budget, ViA is otherwise unable to cover the expenses needed for renewal of multimedia laboratory and TV studio.

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 and the consequent shift to online studies fully demonstrated that ViA is ready to adapt to the changing situation and that the infrastructure base is fully adapted to it. From the first day of online studies in March 2020, classes take place on the webex platform, moodle system and e-mail system fully support the exchange of information, notification of news, notification of changes between lecturers and students.

Information on the resources of the study program and its provision is available in Part II, sections 3.1-3.3 of the report.

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

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

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

CPR is a professional study programme, therefore attention is always paid to cooperation with the professionals of the field. This is a reason why during the reporting period quite a few new guest lecturers are involved in the programme, partly due to the fact that a number of new study courses – “Digital Marketing”, “Sports Marketing”, etc. were included in the programme content. Lecturers of several study courses (e.g., “Multimedia Communication”) were replaced in pursuit of closer cooperation with the field, attracting young and creative professionals which would enhance the quality of studies. Several elected lecturers (see *Part II section 4.4.* of the Self-Assessment Report) received a doctoral degree during the reporting period. Information on the elected lecturers is available in Part II sections 3.4 and 3.5).

In total, 28 lecturers participate in the implementation of the study program. Of these, 13 are elected, while the rest are guest lecturers. A good tendency is that guest lecturers are mostly graduates of Vidzeme University College; it shows a good tendency – the experience gained during studies is motivation to return to ViA and share the knowledge and get involved in the training of young professionals. A lot of study courses are implemented by elected lecturers cooperating with guest lecturers. In this way, a good balance is achieved between the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and its approbation, as well as topical issues of the field are integrated in the study process.

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

Selection of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the Communication and PR study program is based on the following criteria: the direction of research and topics of previous research, competence acquired in academic work (preparation of study courses) and knowledge related to the programme content, scientific degree and qualification. A prerequisite for election to academic position is a doctoral degree or a status of doctoral candidate (with the exception of specific courses such as “Environmental Management and Protection” and “Civil Protection”), *doctoral studies at later study stages*, and English language proficiency at least B2 level.

Selection of guest lecturers is based on professional experience, reputation and recognition in the field, including research direction and international recognition in the field of media and communication science, management, as well as practical work experience, as it is, for example, in case of communication and media law courses where Dr. iur. Rihards Gulbis is attracted as a guest lecturer – he has long-term experience in the field of copyright, including experience in working as a scientific analytical advisor to the Supreme Court.

The interdisciplinary nature of the study program determines the broad range of disciplines (communication, media, political science, law, psychology, entrepreneurship, information and communication technology) represented by the teaching staff attracted. All the lecturers involved in the implementation of the study programme have the level of foreign language knowledge that

meets the requirements of the regulatory enactments – B2 level or higher. In 2018-2019, a part of ViA elected lecturers is improving their foreign language skills by participating in the English language training sessions within the framework of the ESF project “Development of Academic Staff and Human Resources of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences” (SAM 8.2.2”).

Information on the involvement of the academic staff in scientific research, both nationally and internationally, is available in *section 4.4. Part II* of report.

4.3. Information on the number of the scientific publications of the academic staff members, involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme, as published during the reporting period by listing the most significant publications published in Scopus or WoS CC indexed journals. As for the social sciences, humanitarian sciences, and the science of art, the scientific publications published in ERIH+ indexed journals may be additionally specified (if applicable).

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

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

In 2020, ViA participated in the National Research Program project "Life with Covid-19: Assessment of the Coronavir Crisis in Latvia and Proposals for Future Societal Sustainability (COVID Life)" which was led by Riga Stradins University. The results of this project are integrated in the study course "Sociology", in the topics about the development of the civil society in Latvia.

In 2019 and 2020, the lecturers of the study field implemented two targeted researches funded by Valmiera City Municipality on the challenges of internal and external communication in the process of the forthcoming administrative-territorial reform. The results of this research are integrated in the study course "Strategic Communication".

Additional information is available in *Part II, Section 4.4* of the report.

4.6. Assessment of the cooperation between the teaching staff members by specifying the mechanisms used to promote the cooperation and ensure the interrelation between the

study courses/ modules. Specify also the proportion of the number of the students and the teaching staff within the study programme (at the moment of the submission of the Self-Assessment Report).

There are many thematically similar study courses in the Communication and PR study program, for example, in the field of written communication ("Creative Writing", "Written Communication", "Academic Writing", considering how much attention is paid to written communication skills by industry professionals and its role in the renewed professional standard. In order to ensure the complementarity of these courses, lecturers' meetings have been held several times to discuss the content of the courses, the distribution of topics between the courses. The same can be said about the course block dedicated to the development of students' research skills: "Research Methodology I and II", Research Practice. The lecturers of these courses also meet and discuss to find the best model on how to gradually and to an appropriate extent ensure the development of students' research competencies, so that students in the 4th study year are prepared for bachelor's thesis development, as well as research work after graduation. The lecturers also coordinate the types and formats of practical work to be performed in the study courses - for example, it was found that in a number of study courses the students simulate the establishment of a company. A discussion has taken place and such duplication of practical tasks has been avoided, as the students expressed their dissatisfaction.

Upon planning and implementing study courses, lecturers pay attention to planning student individual and group work in such formats that would allow students to consolidate or test the knowledge acquired through practical tasks such as social simulation, strategic games and others. This approach is in line with the general tendency regarding acquisition of communication science at the higher education institutions in Europe - to offer an integrated approach to the training of young professionals that addresses thinking, process management and operational activity level. Such an approach is possible because a lot of study courses are implemented by cooperation between elected lecturers and guest lecturers - professionals of the field. In this way, a good balance is achieved between the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and its approbation, as well as topical issues of the field are integrated in the study process.

28 lecturers are involved in the implementation of the study program, which currently forms the ratio of 28 lecturers to 69 students (2.5 students per lecturer).

Annexes

III. Description of the Study Programme - 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme		
Compliance of the joint study programme with the provisions of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (table)		
Statistics on the students over the reporting period	2P-Student-statistics-2010-2020-AIKA-IKZ.png	2P-Studentu-statistika-2010-2020-AIKA-IKZ.xlsx
III. Description of the Study Programme - 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof		
Compliance of the study programme with the State Education Standard	31P-CPR_compliance with a standard_15122020.docx	31P-KSA_atbilstiba valsts standartam_15122020.docx
Compliance of the qualification to be acquired upon completion of the study programme with the professional standard (if applicable)	32P-CPR_compliance with a professional standard_09122020_EN.docx	32P-KSA_atbilstiba profesijas standartam_preciz_09122020-LV.docx
Compliance of the study programme with the specific regulatory framework applicable to the relevant field (if applicable)		
Mapping of the study courses/ modules for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study programme	30P-CPR_mapping courses_2020DEC.xlsx	30P-KSA_kursu kartejums_2020DEC.xlsx
Curriculum of the study programme (for each type and form of the implementation of the study programme)	33P-CPR_Implementation plan-edited_03122020-EN.docx	33P-KSA_istenosanas plans_precizejums_03122020-LV.docx
Descriptions of the study courses/ modules	34P-CPR_Study course descriptions-2019.7z	34P-KSA_kursa apraksti_2019.7z
Description of the Study Direction - Other mandatory attachments		
Sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme.	36P-Sample-of-diploma-CPR.zip	36P-Diploma-paraugs-KSA.zip
Description of the Study Programme - Other mandatory attachments		
Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued	LiepU-VIA-Cooperation-agreement-WORKING-TRANSLATION.doc	LiepU-VIA-sadarbiba-par-studiju-turpinasanu-MSZ-KSA-2011APR.pdf
Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme	35P-Study-agreement-sample-CPR.docx	35P-Studiju-liguma-paraugs-KSA.docx
Confirmation of the higher education institution/ college that the teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language according to European language levels (see the levels under www.europass.lv), if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.		
If the study programmes in the study direction subject to the assessment are doctoral study programmes, a confirmation that at least five teaching staff members with doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field or sub-field of science, in which the study programme has intended to award a scientific degree.		
If academic study programmes are implemented within the study direction, a document confirming that the academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the provisions set out in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause three of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education		
Sample (or samples) of the study agreement	35P-Study-agreement-sample-CPR.docx	35P-Studiju-liguma-paraugs-KSA.docx
If academic study programmes for less than 250 full-time students are implemented within the study direction, the opinion of the Council for Higher Education shall be attached in compliance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.		

Strategic Communication and Governance

Title of the higher education institution	<i>Information and Communication Sciences</i>
ProcedureStudyProgram.Name	<i>Strategic Communication and Governance</i>
Education classification code	<i>45321</i>
Type of the study programme	<i>Academic master study programme</i>
Name of the study programme director	<i>Agnese</i>
Surname of the study programme director	<i>Dāvidsone</i>
E-mail of the study programme director	<i>agnese.davidsone@va.lv</i>
Title of the study programme director	<i>PhD</i>
Phone of the study programme director	<i>26603344</i>
Goal of the study programme	<p><i>The study programme “Strategic Communication and Governance” is developed with a purpose to provide internationally competitive education in communication science, as well as to prepare highly educated communication professionals for the work in public, non-governmental and private sectors.</i></p> <p><i>In accordance with the State standard for academic education, the study programme content is developed to provide a set of knowledge, skills and competences in accordance with Level 7 knowledge, skills and competences specified in the Framework of the Classification of the Latvian Education. The study programme content is developed to provide students with in-depth theoretical knowledge and research skills to develop a successful professional career, as well as to pursue doctoral studies.</i></p>

<p>Tasks of the study programme</p>	<p><i>To implement the programme, the following objectives are set:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. To study in-depth the theories of communication science in the context of current theories of other social sciences and humanities, thus contributing to the development of interdisciplinary higher education content offer;</i> <i>2. To acquire specialized knowledge of planning, managing and assessing strategic communication processes at the organizational and national level to strengthen public security and sustainability in various dimensions in the public, non-governmental and private sectors;</i> <i>3. To raise awareness of social, political, economic and cultural processes and development tendencies in society at the national and international level, and, accordingly, to develop skills to foresee and plan professional activities;</i> <i>4. To develop skills to synthesize and apply theoretical knowledge required in the field to respond to changing socio-economic conditions to create and deliver innovations;</i> <i>5. To develop skills to use advanced information technologies for professional activities, as well as to protect oneself and one's own data in the context of smart technologies;</i> <i>6. To develop ethical and responsible communication skills;</i> <i>7. To develop critical thinking, information analysis and argumentation skills, as well as to improve self-reflection skills;</i> <i>8. To raise awareness of student civic participation and encourage civic activity;</i> <i>9. To develop research and analytical skills for conducting individual research work and to involve students in communication research projects conducted by the lecturers of the programme, thus preparing students for independent research work in the professional fields corresponding to their professional needs, as well as for further studies at doctoral level;</i> <i>10. To adapt and develop innovative study methods - strategic games, simulations, etc. - in the field of communication science, integrating theoretical knowledge and practical application of the knowledge for the purpose of solving various communication-related problems in a changing and unpredictable environment, thus ensuring the development of student creativity, adaptation and cooperation skills;</i> <i>11. To develop and update high quality study content according to theoretical, research and methodological innovations in communication science and dynamics of social, cultural, economic and political context.</i>
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Results of the study programme	<p><i>As a result of acquiring the study programme, highly qualified communication professionals will be trained who are able to successfully compete in the international labour market, offering the high level knowledge, skills and competences necessary to plan, manage, assess strategic communication, as well as to advise senior management, to provide advise on achieving strategic and sustainable goals for organizational and business growth.</i></p> <p>KNOWLEDGE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Knowledge of current theories of communication, management, psychology (human behaviour, thinking) and other related sciences.</i> - <i>Knowledge of implementation of strategic communication planning, management and assessment processes at the organizational and national level.</i> - <i>Knowledge of public security and sustainability issues, as well as of current geopolitical challenges in Latvia and in the world.</i> - <i>Knowledge of strategic leadership and innovation enhancing in organizations and public administration.</i> - <i>Understanding of relationships between society and power, modern approaches to promoting civic participation in the age of digital technologies.</i> - <i>Knowledge of methodological specificity of research in the field of communication, including compliance with the principles of research ethics.</i> <p>SKILLS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Skills to plan and implement professional activities in accordance with social, political, economic and cultural processes and tendencies in society.</i> - <i>Skills to protect oneself, one's own organization, data and other information in the environment of digital technologies.</i> - <i>Ability to analyze a text, image, video, recognize elements of manipulation and influential communication.</i> - <i>Skills to reflect critically on content produced by themselves and others, to analyze the quality of arguments.</i> - <i>Skills to act in accordance with fundamental principles of ethical and responsible communication.</i> - <i>Skills to mitigate cyber security risks and challenges posed by modern technologies to the individual, organizations, and public security in general.</i> <p>COMPETENCES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>To apply theoretical knowledge acquired during the study programme for creative solution of complex strategic communication problems in an integrated, innovative way.</i> - <i>To apply knowledge acquired for the work in changing circumstances, making individual and group decisions in situations of high uncertainty.</i> - <i>To discuss and find solutions to professionally ethical dilemmas, to demonstrate community-centred and responsible attitude.</i> - <i>To demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge of research methodology acquired during studies in independent research, including the ability to comply with the principles of academic and research ethics.</i>
Final examination upon the completion of the study programme	Master's Thesis

Study programme forms

Full time studies - 2 years - latvian

Study type and form	<i>Full time studies</i>
Duration in full years	2
Duration in month	0
Language	<i>latvian</i>
Amount (CP)	80
Admission requirements (in English)	<i>Professional or academic bachelor's degree or equivalent higher education</i>
Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	<i>Master's Degree of Social Sciences in Communication Science</i>
Qualification to be obtained (in english)	

Places of implementation

Place name	City	Address
Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences	VALMIERA	CĒSU IELA 4, VALMIERA, VALMIERAS NOVADS, LV-4201

Full time studies - 2 years - english

Study type and form	<i>Full time studies</i>
Duration in full years	2
Duration in month	0
Language	<i>english</i>
Amount (CP)	80
Admission requirements (in English)	<i>Professional or academic bachelor's degree or equivalent higher education</i>
Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	<i>Master's Degree of Social Sciences in Communication Science</i>
Qualification to be obtained (in english)	

Places of implementation

Place name	City	Address
Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences	VALMIERA	CĒSU IELA 4, VALMIERA, VALMIERAS NOVADS, LV-4201

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

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

This study program is was licensed during the accreditation period. The main changes are the reduction of the amount of study practice from six to two credit points, taking into account that potential students saw it as an obstacle to the possibilities to combine studies and work. The study courses have also been merged, introducing more courses with a larger amount of credit points in the program, which reduced the fragmentation of the program. This was in line with the recommendations of the licensing experts. The regulations of study practice are also specified, as well as the study course examination forms in the study course descriptions. The admission rules specify the language level required of foreign applicants. The content of the study program integrates the topic of lobbying, as indicated by licensing experts.

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

Refer to the annex for the overview of the number of students of the study programme (see *Annex 2*), we are not making an assessment at this moment, as the first students were admitted to the study programme in September, 2020. The studies are conducted in English and 10 students are admitted, of which 5 are foreign students.

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

During the process of preparation of the study programme, a description of the study programme is developed, and the analysis of the interconnection between the study programme objectives and the planned outcomes is made in order to ensure mutual coherence of objectives and outcomes which is further used for the mapping of the study courses. Relevance and coherence between the study programme outcomes and the results of specific study courses in the process of developing the study programme content are assessed several times: upon preparing the study programme for licensing – at the meetings of the study direction council, and also during discussions among the

director of the study direction and individual lecturers on the content of study courses and their outcomes. In this way, a high degree of interconnection between the study programme outcomes and the results of specific study courses is achieved. In the future, after implementation of the first cycle of the study programme in the ICS study direction, it is definitely necessary to return to the issue of interconnection by analyzing student feedback on courses and meeting students at the end of each semester, also by discussing the study programme content in the ICS study direction council and in the professional advisory council established in the study direction, as well as by individual discussions with lecturers. Admission requirements to this programme: Professional or academic Bachelor's degree or equivalent higher education in social sciences or humanities. Such requirements provide opportunities for a wide range of students to apply for studies. A mandatory requirement for admission is a thesis application (there is a specific form for this purpose) and an interview with each applicant, which provides for a possibility to understand research interests, experience and expectations of potential students regarding the study process and its outcomes.

Goal of the study programme: The study programme “Strategic Communication and Governance” is developed with a purpose to provide internationally competitive education in communication science, as well as to prepare highly educated communication professionals for the work in public, non-governmental and private sectors.

Objectives set for the implementation of the study programme:

1. To study in-depth the theories of communication science in the context of current theories of other social sciences and humanities, thus contributing to the development of interdisciplinary higher education content offer;
2. To acquire specialized knowledge of planning, managing and assessing strategic communication processes at the organizational and national level to strengthen public security and sustainability in various dimensions in the public, non-governmental and private sectors;
3. To raise awareness of social, political, economic and cultural processes and development tendencies in society at the national and international level, and, accordingly, to develop skills to foresee and plan professional activities;
4. To develop skills to synthesize and apply theoretical knowledge required in the field to respond to changing socio-economic conditions to create and deliver innovations;
5. To develop skills to use advanced information technologies for professional activities, as well as to protect oneself and one's own data in the context of smart technologies;
6. To develop ethical and responsible communication skills;
7. To develop critical thinking, information analysis and argumentation skills, as well as to improve self-reflection skills;
8. To raise awareness of student civic participation and encourage civic activity;
9. To develop research and analytical skills for conducting individual research work and to involve students in communication research projects conducted by the lecturers of the programme, thus preparing students for independent research work in the professional fields corresponding to their professional needs, as well as for further studies at doctoral level;
10. To adapt and develop innovative study methods – strategic games, simulations, etc. – in the field of communication science, integrating theoretical knowledge and practical application of the knowledge for the purpose of solving various communication-related problems in a changing and unpredictable environment, thus ensuring the development of student creativity, adaptation and cooperation skills;
11. To develop and update high quality study content according to theoretical, research and methodological innovations in communication science and dynamics of social, cultural, economic and political context.

Learning outcomes to be achieved in the study programme and their relation to the goals and objectives of the programme

As a result of acquiring the study programme, highly qualified communication professionals will be trained who are able to successfully compete in the international labour market, offering the high level knowledge, skills and competences necessary to plan, manage, assess strategic communication, as well as to advise senior management, to provide advise on achieving strategic and sustainable goals for organizational and business growth. *The table 12* below provides an overview of the study programme outcomes: knowledge, skills and competences according to LQF Level 7.

Table 12. Overview of the learning outcomes to be achieved in the study programme and its relation to specific objectives defined in the study programme.

		Appropriate objectives of the study programme
KNOWLEDGE	Knowledge of current theories of communication, management, psychology (human behaviour, thinking) and other related sciences.	1, 10, 11
	Knowledge of implementation of strategic communication planning, management and assessment processes at the organizational and national level.	2, 3, 5
	Knowledge of public security and sustainability issues, as well as of current geopolitical challenges in Latvia and in the world.	3, 4, 5, 9
	Knowledge of strategic leadership and innovation enhancing in organizations and public administration.	4
	Understanding of relationships between society and power, modern approaches to promoting civic participation in the age of digital technologies.	8
	Knowledge of methodological specificity of research in the field of communication, including compliance with the principles of research ethics.	9
SKILLS	Skills to plan and implement professional activities in accordance with social, political, economic and cultural processes and tendencies in society.	2, 4, 6
	Skills to protect oneself, one's own organization, data and other information in the environment of digital technologies.	4, 5
	Skills to analyze a text, image, video, recognize elements of manipulation and influential communication.	5, 7
	Skills to reflect critically on content produced by themselves and others, to analyze the quality of arguments.	7
	Skills to act in accordance with fundamental principles of ethical and responsible communication.	6, 7
	Skills to mitigate cyber security risks and challenges posed by modern technologies to the individual, organizations, and public security in general.	5

COMPETENCES	To apply theoretical knowledge acquired during the study programme for creative solution of complex strategic communication problems in an integrated, innovative way.	1-10
	To apply the knowledge acquired for the work in changing circumstances, making individual and group decisions in situations of high uncertainty.	2, 3
	To discuss and find solutions to professionally ethical dilemmas, to demonstrate community-centred and responsible attitude.	6, 7, 8
	To demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge of research methodology acquired during studies in independent research, including the ability to comply with the principles of academic and research ethics.	9

Admission requirements to this programme: Professional or academic Bachelor's degree or equivalent higher education. Such requirements provide opportunities for a wide range of students to apply for studies. A mandatory requirement for admission is a thesis application (there is a specific form for this purpose) and an interview with each applicant, which provides for a possibility to understand research interests, experience and expectations of the potential students regarding the study process and its outcomes.

Admission requirements for applicants are laid down in the *ViA Admission Regulations for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Study Programmes*, which, in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, are approved by November 1 of the current year and published on the [ViA website](#).

In order to start studies, it is required to have at least professional Bachelor's degree or equivalent higher education (60 CP programme) or academic Bachelor's degree or equivalent higher education (80 CP programme).

Upon applying for studies, an applicant should submit educational documents, CV, Master's thesis topic application and a document confirming English language proficiency (English language proficiency certificate or a language proficiency document issued by an international testing institution during the last five years certifying compliance with at least Level B2. If the previous education was acquired in English, proof of English proficiency is not required).

The admission competition is based on the result of the entrance examination (interview), which consists of the following criteria: Master's thesis application - 40%; knowledge of English - 10%; motivation for studies - 20%; weighted average mark in the diploma supplement - 30%.

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

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

The content of the study program corresponds to the development tendencies of the communication field, the needs of the labor market, as well as the scientific tendencies in the field of communication. The current challenges of the communication industry are currently related to the growing influence of digital media in the public space, the increase in the amount of disinformation, the emphasis on media literacy, the need to improve the quality of strategic communication - all these and a number of other aspects are integrated in the content of the study program. The study program is very new, its content is topical and related to the significant development trends of the industry. Below is an overview of the various measures that were implemented during the preparation of the study program and with the help of which the existing concept of the study program was created, the objectives were defined and the content of the courses was developed.

As Latvia becomes an increasingly active member of various international organizations - the European Union, NATO, OECD and others - demands regarding the quality of public administration communication, openness to the population, establishing long-term cooperation links with various stakeholders are increasing. It poses various challenges to communication professionals. The implementation of the all-inclusive State defence system has been initiated in Latvia for the purpose of deepening cooperation between public authorities, raising public awareness of potential threats and opportunities for self-defence, as well as developing tools and ways for self-organization in crisis situations. Therefore, training of highly qualified strategic communication specialists in public administration, non-governmental and private sector is crucial for the Latvian State both internally and externally, as understanding, knowledge and skills in strategic communication are crucial for the national security, as well as for enhancing the reputation and image of the State, unity of society, trust of its citizens, and other nationally prioritized tasks and objectives, as laid down in the all-inclusive protection concept. The substantiation for the development of the new study programme "Strategic Communication and Governance" is related to these processes, considering that Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences since its foundation has always taken a proactive position in the development of its study offer in accordance with the development tendencies in Latvia, Europe and in the world.

Looking beyond the borders of Latvia, there has been a tremendous change in the mechanism of information access and public space formation over the last 10 years, mainly due to the very rapid development of digital technologies. The spread of technologies and its widespread application has changed the usual patterns of communication and the speed of information circulation. At the same time, the geopolitical context for international cooperation has dramatically changed. In Latvia, as well as elsewhere in Europe, we are experiencing an increasing proliferation of propaganda and disinformation, as well as risks of hybrid threat. It is not possible to find solutions within one country - Latvia is in the same position as a number of other countries of the former socialist bloc, such as Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, etc. Increasing numbers of highly-skilled, strategically-minded communications professionals are also needed in these countries, and ViA partner universities, for example, in Ukraine and Georgia, are already offering training content in strategic communication or are getting ready to open new study programmes in the coming years. This opens up opportunities to develop double degree programmes based on the new ViA study programme, to carry out purposeful marketing of the study programme abroad and to attract international students for Master's education in Latvia.

A number of data sources were taken into account in the planning of the programme content. First, it was the annual European Communication Monitor (www.communicationmonitor.eu/download/2557/). This is research conducted annually by the European Association of Communication Directors, more than 3,000 respondents from 48 European countries, including Latvia, participate in research each year. Each year, research focuses on a pressing issue that is being explored in the context of strategic communication governance. The monitoring of 2018 reflected the problem related to disinformation (false news) in the digital media environment – it was found that nearly 40% of respondents working within an organization are thinking of building and maintaining trust in the organization due to this problem. This is explained by the fact that disinformation affects also organizations and brands undermining the trust of their stakeholders and audiences, which, in the long term, poses challenges to the goals of the company/organization. This was one of the reasons why courses on critical thinking, recognition of influential communication elements, argumentation analysis, as well as data security in the digital environment were incorporated into the study programme content.

During the process of programme development, experts involved within the framework of the specific objective 8.2.2. of ESF Operational Programme “Growth and Employment” were consulted. In the course of this project, ViA employs a professor from the University of Tartu, Andra Siibak, as well as a recognized professional and communication science PhD student, Ieva Zaumane. The Director of the ICS study direction discussed the content of the future programme with both experts, and I. Zaumane was involved in the development of the substantiation of the study programme, the collection of information on the results of the European Communication Monitoring, and at the beginning of 2019, she repeatedly participated in both face-to-face and skype meetings where the content of the new study programme was planned.

Besides, intentions regarding the study programme were presented and discussed in the Advisory Council of the ICS study direction at the end of 2018. The members of the Council emphasized that there is a great need in Latvia for professionals capable of performing duties of a communication manager, senior management consultant, assisting organizations with communication to achieve their goals by establishing sustainable relationships with stakeholders. This recommendation is taken as a basis for further planning of the study programme content, especially in the section of study courses dedicated to approbation of theoretical knowledge in the field of communication science. The members of the Advisory Council advised also to promote student cooperation during the study courses and to organize group work. This idea is integrated in the study programme implementation format – developing strategic games and social simulations as widely used study methods, as well as properly preparing lecturers to integrate such methods in the study process.

In conclusion, since 2016 the management of ViA and the ICS study direction has been extensively consulting with a number of local and international partners: NATO Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence in Riga, State Chancellery, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Culture, King’s College in London. Proposals and ideas of these different partners are taken into consideration in the development process of the study programme. In 2018, the Latvian Association of Communication (LAKA), ViA’s cooperation partner in the field of communication, supported renaming of the study programme, pointing out that changes in the study programme will increase qualitative education opportunities in Latvia, which is very important for professionals dealing with strategic communication issues in public administration, or for those who want to pursue a career in this field. ViA delegations discussed the study programme content while visiting Kiev-Mohila Academy in Ukraine, and in spring of 2019 at several universities in Tbilisi, Georgia, such as the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA). A number of universities have expressed interest in developing double degree programmes in strategic communication with ViA at the Master’s level

and, on the basis of such a programme, to continue to negotiate on a joint doctoral programme in communication science in the future. Partnerships are also being set up in Europe: Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden, Great Britain, Poland, Portugal and elsewhere to implement the study programme and promote international communication and student engagement.

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

The implementation of the study programme was started in autumn of 2020. The information included in the study courses and learning outcomes to be achieved will be reviewed every year, lecturers will take into consideration both the tendencies of the field and student feedback on the study courses, and every year the literature used for studies will be supplemented. During preparation of the self-assessment report, formulations of the study programme goals regarding the study content, as well as the methods used in the study process will be reviewed and updated as necessary, taking into account the early experience of the study programme implementation.

During the development of the study programme, the study course results were mapped by checking the compliance of each individual course with the goals and objectives set in the study programme. No comments regarding mapping were received from the experts who licensed the study programme. The mapping of the courses of the SCG study programme is added in the annex to the report reflecting how individual study courses contribute to the achievement of study programme outcomes.

[Refer to the annex for the mapping of the SCG study programme courses for the achievement of the study outcomes \(see Annex 43\).](#)

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

The study programme is implemented by help of various study forms – lectures, seminars, discussions, practical classes, use of on-line resources, social simulations, role plays, literature studies, applied games, individual and group consultations, study visits, case studies, analysis of audio and video materials, development of student practical work (individual and group-work), fieldwork, visualization, academic posters, multimedia presentations, skype conferences. Advanced information technologies are widely used in the study process. During lectures, lecturers and students have an opportunity to use computer classrooms, multimedia laboratory, as well as the modern TV studio made anew in 2017. During the study process, opportunities provided by the

intranet are actively used: moodle.va.lv – it is an electronic study environment, where necessary study materials and lecture presentations of each study course are stored, information is exchanged, where students post their presentations and homework; it is used also as ViA electronic repository of documents; intranet message repository; email, skype, social media. A student has to acquire an average of 50-100 pages of scientific text per credit. No less than two individual papers should be written in each study course, as well as examinations have to be taken. At the end of the course, each student should take a written or oral examination or a test, or submit a larger presentation demonstrating the knowledge acquired during the course. Such a diverse range of study methods and technological tools ensures high quality studies – students acquire and perfect both academic knowledge and practical application skills already in the course of the studies. In this way, a diverse, attractive and engaging study process is ensured providing also authentic experience (simulation games, role-plays), opportunities to develop portfolios useful for further career (multimedia projects, written, visual communication projects), as a result students are well prepared for professional activity in the field of communication.

The following forms of work are used to promote the dialogue with students: studies in small groups, which promote student involvement in the study process; application of interactive study methods; assessment of independent and research papers and their discussion with the authors; annual projects, peer review and public defence; consultations; cumulative assessment system; student surveys about the study course. Individual communication between a lecturer and a student (outside lectures, seminars and classes) is possible through individual consultations with the lecturer, as well as via e-mail and skype.

For more information on assessment methods and adherence to the principles of student-centred education, see *Part II, section 1.6 of the self-assessment report*.

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

Internship is an integral part of the study programmes implemented by ViA. The goal of internship is to provide the students of the Master's programme "Strategic Communication and Governance" with a possibility to perfect the knowledge and skills acquired during their studies and to prepare for their Master's thesis. The Internship Regulations, forms of internship report and journal, as well as a sample of the internship programme form are added in the [Annex 20](#).

The amount of internship is 80 hours (2 credit points), and students do internship during the 3rd semester. Students choose their internship place in accordance with the specificity of the Master's thesis topic, harmonizing it with the director of the ICS study direction and the Master's thesis supervisor (if the supervisor is already appointed).

During preparation of the study programme, cooperation agreements are entered into with a number of organizations that are committed to providing students with internship possibilities. A list of agreements is added in the [Annex 18](#).

Duties of a student during internship:

1. To complete the internship programme,

2. To meet with the internship contact person on a regular basis to analyze internship progress,
3. At the end of internship, to present and defend publicly the work performed during internship.

During internship, a student prepares a report on the work done in the organization. This report is prepared in accordance with the internship programme developed by the student and submitted to the director of the study programme prior to internship, as well as in accordance with the conditions agreed between the student and internship coordinator at the beginning of internship and internship report requirements. During development of the internship programme, the student consults with the programme director and/or supervisor of the Master's thesis (if the supervisor is already appointed) regarding the programme content. The internship programme provides information on the following: the goal of internship, its interrelation with the chosen topic of the Master's thesis, tasks planned during internship, the chosen internship organization (or organizations), expected internship results and quality requirements set for them.

Internship is failed if:

1. Negative feedback on student behaviour and negative and superficial attitude is received;
2. During internship defence, a student is not able to give an adequate report of the work done and the usefulness of internship, as well as its relation to the Master's thesis
3. Internship tasks are not performed or their quality does not comply with the requirements

Internship opportunities to foreign students are offered through the Erasmus + program, as well as a number of cooperation agreements have been signed in the study program with organizations that operate internationally and can provide internship opportunities for foreign students, such as the Baltic Media Excellence Center, Latvian Internet Association, Baltic Research Journalism Center. Re: Baltica ", National Library of Latvia.

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

Not applicable because there are no graduates at the moment of submitting the self-assessment report.

Refer to the annex for the informative overview on the compliance of the SCG study programme with the State education standard (see *Annex 44*).

Refer to the annex for the plan of the SCG study programme (see *Annex 45*).

Refer to the annex for the descriptions of the study courses of the SCG study programme (see *Annex 46*).

Refer to the annex for a sample study agreement of the SCG study programme (see *Annex 47*).

Refer to the annex for a sample of the SCG study programme diploma and its supplement (see *Annex 49*).

2.6. Analysis and assessment of the outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students, graduates, and employers, and the use of these outcomes for the improvement

of the content and quality of studies by providing the respective examples.

Upon starting the study programme, the director of the study direction will meet the students every semester to discuss student experience and to hear suggestions for the improvement of the study programme content. As the number of students is relatively small, it will not be useful to organize a survey in the beginning, instead data will be collected in a focus group.

During preparation of the study programme, industry organizations were consulted and their support was received. The management of ViA and ICS study direction consulted extensively with a number of local and international partners and potential employers: NATO Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence in Riga, State Chancellery, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Culture, etc. The main arguments were as follows: the new study programme will increase high quality education opportunities in Latvia, which is very important for professionals dealing with strategic communication issues and who wish to pursue a career in this field. Further regular exchange of information and opinions and involvement in the study process is planned with the above mentioned organizations, encouraging organizations within their competence to submit proposals and opinions on the content of the study programmes and outcomes to be achieved, to offer topical research topics for Master's theses, to the extent possible to encourage involvement of their staff in the implementation of the study programmes as guest lecturers and members of the State Examination Commission, to offer cases related to the activities of the organization that could be used in the study process for the case study analysis, as well as to provide internship for the students of the study programme.

Since the end of 2018 Ieva Zaumane, a professional of the field and communication science PhD student, ViA graduate, has also participated in the preparation of the study programme and advised on the substantiation for the development of the study programme, the study programme content, participated in summarization of the information on the results of the European Communication Monitoring.

In May 2018, the Regulations and composition of the ICS study direction Advisory Council in communication affairs were approved (a second Advisory Council in the field of media and journalism is also established in the study direction). The Council consists of ICS students, graduates and employers of the field, whose task is to promote the improvement of the study quality of the study programmes implemented in the study direction, to enhance the compliance with the regulations issued by the Quality Agency for Higher Education and the conditions set by the experts of previous external assessment procedures, as well as to provide recommendations for study programme development and strategic development, incl., to facilitate the preparation of the study directions/study programmes for successful re-accreditation. It is stated that as far as possible, the Advisory Council, within its competence, should support activities related to project funding attraction for the implementation of the study direction programmes and attraction of students, promotion recognition of the study programmes, and protection of the study direction interests in the fields strategic for the study direction. One meeting took place in 2018, the next is planned for the beginning of 2020. In the meantime, separate individual talks have taken place with the members of the council. Communication also took place with a representative of the communication industry at the ViA Convention.

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

the study courses acquired during the mobility.

Mobility in the study program is possible within the framework of the Erasmus + program, based on the agreements concluded by ViA with foreign universities.

In accordance with the Erasmus Charter and the Tripartite Mobility Agreement, the credits obtained at a foreign university or internship organization, are transferred to ViA credits. Upon returning from exchange studies or internships, the student continues to study at ViA according to an individual plan.

See Part II, sections 5 of the self-assessment report (Cooperation and internationalization).

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

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

The resource base available for the implementation of the study program (premises infrastructure, technological support, library collection) is sufficient and appropriate. In accordance with the expert recommendations received during the licensing procedure in 2019, the library collection is supplemented and updated. The only problem already mentioned in the descriptions of other study programs is the relatively limited access to academic databases, based on ViA's financial capacity to allocate funds for extensive database subscriptions. The library's book collection is carefully renewed every year to partially compensate this aspect. The financial base is sufficient to pay for the work of academic staff members in order to attract highly qualified academics, as required by the state standard for the implementation of the academic study program.

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 and the consequent shift to online studies fully demonstrated that ViA is ready to adapt to the changing situation and that the infrastructure base is fully adapted to it. From the first day of online studies in March 2020, classes take place on the webex platform, moodle system and e-mail system fully support the exchange of information, notification of news, notification of changes between lecturers and students.

Information on the resources of the study program and its provision is available in *Part II, sections 3.1-3.3* of the report.

3.2. Assessment of the study provision and scientific support, including the resources provided within the cooperation with other science institutes and institutions of higher

education (applicable to the doctoral study programmes).

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

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

In total 17 lecturers participate in the implementation of the study programmes of the study direction, 11 of them are elected or are in process of becoming elected. Several guest lecturers are ViA graduates; it shows a good tendency – the experience gained during studies is motivation to return to ViA and share the knowledge and get involved in the training of young professionals. A lot of study courses are implemented by elected lecturers cooperating with guest lecturers. In this way, a good balance is achieved between the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and its approbation, as well as topical issues of the field are integrated in the study process. During the licensing of the study programme, no comments or suggestions regarding the addition to or replacement of the teaching staff were received. The study program is completely new, so there have been no changes in the composition.

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

The implementation of the study programme was started in 2020. Upon developing the study programme, the lecturers involved were selected on the basis of the following criteria: the direction of research and topics of previous research, competence acquired in academic work (preparation of study courses) and knowledge related to the programme content, scientific degree and qualification. A prerequisite for involvement in the implementation of the study programme was a doctoral degree or a status of doctoral candidate during the programme licensing period (with the exception of specific courses such as “Environmental Management and Protection” and “Labour Protection”), doctoral studies at later study stages, and English language proficiency at least B2 level, considering that the study programme will be implemented in both Latvian and English. The interdisciplinary nature of the study programme determines the broad range of disciplines (communication, political science, history, law, environmental and resource sustainability, psychology) represented by the teaching staff involved. The lecturers who will participate in the implementation of the study programme have been active in scientific and academic activities on

topics such as research on propaganda history, research on contemporary propaganda techniques and analysis of influential messages, research on online relationships between individuals, various socio-psychological aspects of online environment, the role of culture in communication, visual culture and semiotics, transmedia storytelling, research on communication ethics and communication law. Selection of guest lecturers is based on the direction of scientific activity and international recognition in the field of media and communication science, as well as practical work experience.

In 2018-2019, a part of ViA elected lecturers is improving their foreign language skills by participating in the English language training sessions within the framework of the ESF project "Development of Academic Staff and Human Resources of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences" (SAM 8.2.2)".

Three of the lecturers – J. Buholcs, A. Dāvidsone, G. Krūmiņš, V.Silkāne, I.Bērziņa – have a status of the expert of the Latvian Council of Science.

Since 2018, the staff involved in the implementation of the study program has been purposefully motivated to candidate to position of associate professor in order to ensure the required number of associate professors or professors for the implementation of the academic master's program. By the autumn of 2020, four associate professors have been elected, in 2021 another election is planned.

Information on the involvement of academic staff in scientific research, both nationally and internationally, is available in *Part II, section 4.4* of the report.

4.3. Information on the number of the scientific publications of the academic staff members, involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme, as published during the reporting period by listing the most significant publications published in Scopus or WoS CC indexed journals. As for the social sciences, humanitarian sciences, and the science of art, the scientific publications published in ERIH+ indexed journals may be additionally specified (if applicable).

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

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

At the end of 2018, ViA attracted funds from the National Research Program for the implementation of the three-year project “Values in Action: Development of a Responsible, Safe and Educated Civil Society through Research and Development of Action Models”, in which both PhD researchers and four ViA master students, as well as several ViA lecturers who have started or continue doctoral studies. In 2017-2019, the researchers employed in the field of studies implemented the project “Involvement of Mass Media in Integration of Third-Country Nationals in Latvia” supported by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (PMIF), in which recommendations were developed for the development of a code of media ethics in Latvia, as well as a model for media editorial guidelines. In 2019, together with RSU, an application was submitted to the PMIF for the second round of projects, funding was obtained, but unfortunately in the autumn of 2020 the project had to be closed due to problems caused by COVID-19, as it was not possible to implement all planned activities. All of these projects have included media literacy research, as well as media ethics issues in PMIF projects. In 2019 and 2020, IKZ researchers also implemented two targeted studies funded by Valmiera City Municipality in connection with the forthcoming administrative-territorial reform. In 2020, ViA participated in the RSU-led National Research Program project "Life with Covid-19: Assessment of Overcoming the Coronavirus Crisis in Latvia and Proposals for the Future of Public Sustainability (COVID Life)". All projects have obtained different results related to the topics of the courses taught in the study program: media and information literacy, media ethics, influential communication, civil society, participation, and they are respectively integrated into the content of study courses. Based on the results obtained in the project "Values in Action ...", a completely new study course "Civil Society and Participation" has been created, which has been taught since 2020. Since 2018, ViA has been implementing the Erasmus + Strategic Partnership project "Simulation Games in Strategic Communication", in cooperation with the Universities of Vilnius and Tartu. The experience gained in the project on social simulation as a study method is used in the modernization of content teaching (the simulation developed in the project is played in the course "Sustainable development").

Information is available in *Part II, section 4.4* of the report.

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

Upon planning and implementing of the study courses, lecturers pay attention to planning student individual and group work in such formats that would allow students to perfect or test the knowledge acquired through practical tasks – social simulation and strategic games – involving students from several study programmes, and the content of the task is jointly developed by the lecturers of several study courses. In this way, knowledge acquisition and approbation in an integrated way is promoted. Experience gained during the simulation is analyzed from different

perspectives within several study courses. This approach is in line with the general tendency regarding acquisition of communication science at the higher education institutions in Europe - to offer an integrated approach to training of young professionals that addresses thinking, process management and operational activity level. Such an approach is also possible, if during the implementation of the study courses, elected lecturers cooperate with the guest lecturers - professionals of the field, who create the content of the integrated tasks according to the latest development tendencies. In this way, a good balance is achieved between the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and its approbation, as well as current issues are integrated in the study process. During the planning of the study program, the academic staff members met several times and discussed the succession, complementarity and connection of the courses, thus ensuring that the acquisition of knowledge and skills takes place gradually during the acquisition of the program. Mutual coordination will continue in the future, based on the experience of the first year of the MIL program, when the lecturers met and discussed the implementation of the program after each study semester.

A total of 17 lecturers are involved in the implementation of the main part of the study program. Since studies are currently only in the first course, the ratio to the number of students at this point is 9 teachers per 10 students (1.1 student per lecturer).

Annexes

III. Description of the Study Programme - 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme		
Compliance of the joint study programme with the provisions of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (table)		
Statistics on the students over the reporting period	2P-Student-statistics-2010-2020-AIKA-IKZ.png	2P-Studentu-statistika-2010-2020-AIKA-IKZ.xlsx
III. Description of the Study Programme - 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof		
Compliance of the study programme with the State Education Standard	44P-SCG_compliance with the ctandard-edited-EN.docx	44P-SKP_atbilstiba valsts standartam_preciz-LV.docx
Compliance of the qualification to be acquired upon completion of the study programme with the professional standard (if applicable)		
Compliance of the study programme with the specific regulatory framework applicable to the relevant field (if applicable)		
Mapping of the study courses/ modules for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study programme	43P-SCG_mapping_2020DEC.xlsx	43P-SKP_kursu kartejums_2020DEC.xlsx
Curriculum of the study programme (for each type and form of the implementation of the study programme)	45P-SCG_Implementation plan-edited-15122020.docx	45P-SKP_istenosanas plans_precizejums_15122020.docx
Descriptions of the study courses/ modules	46P-SCG_course descriptions_2019.zip	46P-SKP_kursa apraksti_2019.zip
Description of the Study Direction - Other mandatory attachments		
Sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme.	48P-Sample-of-diploma-SCG.zip	48P-Diploma-paraugs-SKP.zip
Description of the Study Programme - Other mandatory attachments		
Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued	RSU_SCG-VIA-Cooperation-agreement-WORKING-TRANSLATION.doc	Ligums ar RSU_SKP.pdf
Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme	47P-Study-agreement-sample-SCG.docx	47P-Studiju-liguma-paraugs-SKP.docx
Confirmation of the higher education institution/ college that the teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language according to European language levels (see the levels under www.europass.lv), if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.	Apliecinajums-MIP-SKP-anglu-valoda.edoc	Apliecinajums-MIP-SKP-anglu-valoda.edoc
If the study programmes in the study direction subject to the assessment are doctoral study programmes, a confirmation that at least five teaching staff members with doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field or sub-field of science, in which the study programme has intended to award a scientific degree.		
If academic study programmes are implemented within the study direction, a document confirming that the academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the provisions set out in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause three of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education	Apliecinajums-MIP-SKP-AL.55.pants-Latvian-only.zip	Apliecinajums-MIP-SKP-AL.55.pants-Latvian-only.zip
Sample (or samples) of the study agreement	47P-Study-agreement-sample-SCG.docx	47P-Studiju-liguma-paraugs-SKP.docx
If academic study programmes for less than 250 full-time students are implemented within the study direction, the opinion of the Council for Higher Education shall be attached in compliance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.	CHE-SCG-VIA-opinion-WORKING-TRANSLATION.doc	AIP atzinums_SKP.pdf