

**Joint Report**  
**by the Committee for the Assessment of a Study Direction**  
**on the Assessment of the Study Direction**

1. The expert shall provide an assessment in the scale of four points about each aspect in general and a concise comment, that describes the identified positive factors, deficiencies, recommendations for improving quality, possible threats, as well as provide information about the facts or materials that prove the assessment made.

2. The grade in points mainly indicates the compliance with the aims and objectives that have been set.

**Scale of Assessment**

| No. | Explanation of the assessment of the study direction  | Assessment (points) |
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| 1.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study direction is on an excellent level. The performance is described by an excellent assessment in all issues subject to the particular criterion. Also on this, the highest level of the assessment, some minor deficiencies could be detected in connection with the assessment criterion, for the elimination of which major improvements are not required | 4                   |
| 2.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study direction is on a good level, complies with all requirements. Strong points dominate, and significant deficiencies are not detected. The deficiencies that have been detected can be easily eliminated  | 3                   |
| 3.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study direction meets the minimum requirements. The performance is described by a comparatively high proportion of deficiencies and significant shortcomings with respect to the specific indicator. Detailed planned long-term actions are required to eliminate these shortcomings, as well as stakeholders' support and additional resources                 | 2                   |
| 4.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study direction does not meet the minimum requirements, significant deficiencies prevail  | 1                   |

Name, surname of experts

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Name of institution of higher education or college

Vidzemes Augstskola/Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

Name of study direction

Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Leisure Organisation

Study programmes of the relevant study direction

- Study programme “Tourist Guide – Travel and Event Manager” (Professional Bachelor; full-time studies, code: 42812)
- Study programme “Tourism Organisation and Management” (Professional Bachelor; full-time studies, code: 42812)

- Study programme “Strategic Tourism Management” (Professional Master; full-time studies, code: 47812)
- Study programme “International Tourism Events Management” (Academic Master; full-time studies, code: 45812)

Date of external assessment visit February 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## I. Management of the Study Direction

1.1. Is the inclusion of study programmes of the relevant study direction well-grounded? Is there any succession in the study programmes of various levels? Are the codes and types of study programmes relevant?

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| 3 | The programmes are well-grounded in the study direction. There are two Bachelor degree programmes and two Master’s degree programmes. So they provide an opportunity for students to progress from Bachelor degree to Master’s degree in a cognate area. Types of study programmes are relevant to Latvian higher education system and the specific programmes are suitable for regions of Latvia. The codes and types of study programmes are relevant. However, they do not offer either College-level or PhD studies in this study direction. A PhD programme might be provided in conjunction with other universities in Latvia (at the moment the idea about PhD programme and its direction is not clear). |
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1.2. Has the analysis of the strong and weak points, opportunities and threats of the study direction been performed in high-quality? Have the internal and external conditions for the development of the study direction been assessed unbiasedly?

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| 4 | The self-evaluation report (SER) has provided good access to the strategic plan of ViA which includes an analysis of the perceived strengths and weaknesses. Weaknesses mentioned included the low number of students on the programmes while threats included the demographic situation in Latvia (falling population). While these issues are mentioned, it is not clear that any clear plan has been made to overcome their effects. The provided comprehensive SWOT analysis for the study direction included in the SER clearly interprets a majority of statements as strengths. Overall, SWOT can be evaluated as unbiased. However, no market analysis has been carried out; however, in relation to this criterion, this is a minor drawback and does not have any impact so far. At the moment there are several universities implementing similar study programmes in Latvia who are direct competitors for ViA. The group of experts noticed a few internal decisions which should be considered: 1) re-open Part-time studies which were cancelled and 2) organise the admission for Master studies every year. |
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1.3. Have the demands of the labour market taken into consideration in planning the development of the study direction and in its implementation?

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| 3 | ViA has taken some steps to ensure that programmes meet the needs of the labour market. There is an Advisory Board of 20 members from industry and |
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|  | <p>municipalities.</p> <p>In October 2016 a major conference was organised which brought together Tourism industry personnel and academics in that field. But the panel could not see evidence of a comprehensive labour market plan which quantified the need for different categories of graduates and which took account of the output of other universities in Latvia.</p> <p>Also there was mentioned a high demand for graduates of the study direction in Latvia and abroad. A set of more formal mechanisms for meeting of labour market needs has been suggested.</p> <p>Analysis of the demands of the labour market is based only on the <i>Informational Report on Medium to Long Term Labour Market Forecast</i> by the Ministry of Economy which does not reflect industry specific requirements.</p> |
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1.4. Is the management of the implementation of the study process effective for reaching the aims set for the study direction? Is it democratic, with clearly defined obligations and responsibility of the administrative staff, the academic staff, and students?

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| 2 | <p>ViA has an elaborate organisation structure (perhaps too elaborate for the relatively small number of students involved). It has elements which are clearly democratic in intent: teachers are invited to attend monthly meetings of the study council; students are represented on the high level committees of ViA.</p> <p>There are surveys of student opinion at the end of each semester but it was not clear to the panel that there was decisive follow-up to the outcomes of the surveys. There is a lack of Programme Committees (committees of teachers and one student from each year of the programme) which could discuss and solve problems and student concerns quickly and effectively at local level.</p> <p>In addition, there is no clear goal defined for the study direction, therefore it is hard to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of the study process. Management of the study process includes various councils of the Faculty and the study direction level. However, industry representatives and students are not involved in any of them. It is strongly recommended to involve all stakeholders in one of the study direction governance levels.</p> |
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## II. Resources and Provisions of Study Directions

2.1. Are the financial resources sufficient for the implementation of the study programmes of the relevant study direction? Is the control over their use and sustainability ensured?

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| 3 | <p>ViA has made good use of its financial resources from funds available in Latvia and the EU institutions. The development plan it revealed to the panel is heavily dependent on EU funds and present content of the local municipality so there was a slight concern about what would happen if the EU or municipalities funding ceased. However, for the present it is implementing its financial control very well.</p> <p>Financial resources for the implementation of the study programmes and research come from several sources: state (7.5%), municipality, various international funding, including the EU funds (85%), and study fees of the current students (7.5%). Since financial resources provided by the state have been quite stable over the last years, income from student fees is decreasing. It is hard to provide long-term evaluation of the financial support of the study process provided by Valmiera municipality as it has not been stated as separate source. Based on information provided in the report and recognised during visit, there is strong reliance on the EU funds, which in the long term cannot be considered as a stable,</p> |
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|  | long-term financing source. |
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2.2. Is the professionalism of the academic staff of the institution of higher education or the college involved in the implementation of the study direction sufficiently high for implementing high quality studies in the view of professional qualification in the respective field and the didactics of higher education? Is this professionalism appropriate for implementing study programmes of the relevant study direction? Do the members of teaching staff have sufficient level proficiency in English or in other foreign languages to prepare and implement a study programme or separate parts thereof in a foreign language?

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| <b>4</b> | <p>The academic staff members of ViA are very well qualified. And there is a strong commitment to developing staff to the full extent. This is evidenced by the number of staff members who have been funded to travel abroad and for participation in conferences. The effort to develop the research capacity has been impressive. The standard of English among staff members was very good. There are 4 lecturers who are experts of the Latvian Council of Science which is good. One area that could be improved is the provision of a mandatory training course in pedagogy and assessment for all new staff. This could help to ensure teaching excellence.</p> <p>There was also some concern that there is over-reliance on one member of staff to teach many modules. Efforts should be made to recruit staff to lessen this overloading of an individual.</p> <p>Analysing the provided information regarding professionalism of the academic staff, it can be concluded, that over 80% of every study programme is implemented by elected academic staff and only few lecturers are guest lecturers. It can be evaluated positively, the only remaining question being is about ensuring the compliance of the study process with industry needs.</p> |
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2.3. Do the descriptions of study courses, study materials, informative base, including library resources, comply with the aims of the study programmes to be implemented in the respective study direction, their type, particularly distance learning, and a language? Are any resources planned for expanding the library resources (acquisition of literature and subscribing electronic data bases)?

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| <b>4</b> | <p>The panel was satisfied that the library resources are adequate for the programmes being offered. The budget for library acquisitions has fallen in recent years and would be inadequate if the library did not benefit from its entitlement to receive all electronic resources (journals and databases) through its membership of the national public universities network.</p> <p>Library is fully modernized with all resources and content with the latest information and informative exhibitions. Specifically, the extensive information content about the EU and the library opportunities for group works.</p> <p>There is very good on-line access to library resources so that students can gain access either on the campus or from off the campus.</p> <p>There are some special resources available to students on the second campus at Terbatas Street but most students seemed to be unaware of this possibility. This needs to be addressed.</p> <p>Descriptions of the study courses generally comply with the aim of the study programme.</p> |
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2.4. Are the methodological and informative provisions for the study direction, including a library, periodicals, and electronic resources, sufficient for implementing studies based on contemporary scientific findings and requirements for the professional field and for developing scientific research? Do they comply with the provisions of regulatory enactments that regulate the

respective profession?

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| 3 | <p>The panel was satisfied that the library facilities were adequate to support student research work. The databases available are the ones most appropriate for Tourism studies.</p> <p>There is a sufficient amount (titles of books) of specialised literature in the library, including UN WTO depositary library. The University subscribes to the main databases, e.g. EBSCO, Science Direct, Scopus etc.</p> <p>There are signs that some of books available in the library are scanned for the needs of students. Therefore, the issue related to copyright should be clarified.</p> |
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2.5. Are library opening times convenient for students, and do its services, equipment, arrangement facilitate independent studies?

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| 3 | <p>The opening hours of the library are reasonable. But more importantly, the on-line access is available 24 hours per day.</p> <p>The library is shared with community users and this has tended to limit the borrowing periods for students who wish to read books. Some books are meant to be read in the library only. However, they are allowed to borrow the books overnight and students were satisfied with this arrangement.</p> <p>The services, equipment are fully sufficient for independent work of students. The working hours of the library are from 10:00 to 19:00 except on Saturdays (to 16:00) and Sundays. The library is closed on Sundays. Based on interviews with students and the necessity to develop study works also on weekends, the working hours cannot be evaluated as fully satisfactory.</p> |
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2.6. Is the support by the administrative and technical staff sufficient to ensure that study outcomes are reached?

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| 3 | <p>Programmes in Tourism do not require extensive technical support but the support at ViA seemed adequate for technical purposes.</p> <p>For administrative support, it is necessary to facilitate students earning credits for work off the campus, including periods outside Latvia. To date, no problems were mentioned.</p> <p>The Joint Degree with Klaipeda University (Lithuania) seems to be working well and students expressed their satisfaction with the arrangements. That programme operates the ECTS credit accumulation system rather than Credit Points but this does not seem to be a problem.</p> <p>There was some concern among panel members that there are too many information systems in use, including two e-learning platforms and several different administrative systems. It may be possible to rationalise the number of systems.</p> |
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2.7. Do the material technical provisions for the study direction, for example, specific laboratories, equipment, studios, comply with the requirements of the study programmes to be implemented in the framework of the study direction and to the development level of contemporary technologies? Are the study premises equipped with sufficient number of electricity outlets for students' portable computers?

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| 3 | <p>In general the technical facilities are adequate. However, students mentioned the need for more electricity outlets for recharging their portable computers.</p> <p>There are specialist facilities available in the Terbatas Street campus but these are very little used by students of this study direction. The facilities could be very</p> |
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|  | useful for some lines of research. The panel would like to see encouragement to students to use these special technical facilities. |
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### **III. Scientific Research and Scientific Research or Creative Work of Academic Staff and Students**

3.1. Is the organisation and institutional structure of scientific research or creative work effective?

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| <b>4</b> | <p>ViA shows a strong commitment to research and supports research work of its staff. The organisation and institutional structure is effective.</p> <p>ViA has specific internal regulations how to apply for scientific grants. All levels of academic staff have tasks in the science, all student works (bachelor, master thesis etc.) are scientific works and even papers.</p> <p>The organisational and institutional structure of scientific research is effective. Part of academic staff is elected in the Institute of Social, Economic and Humanitarian Research.</p> |
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3.2. Are the resources allocated for research appropriate for the needs? Is the research (creation) work of the academic staff, including participation in scientific conferences or activities of artistic creation, planned in and paid for from the budget of the institution of higher education or the college?

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| <b>3</b> | <p>ViA has adopted a philosophy that all academic staff must be active in research or in industry collaboration, in addition to teaching duties. This is a good position to adopt.</p> <p>Staff members are supported financially to participate in scientific conferences and for travel abroad.</p> <p>However, the funds available for research activities is not large.</p> <p>Physical and informational resources can be evaluated as appropriate. Financial resources provided by the ViA, as well as external funds are sufficient for conducting research. Sufficient financial support for research work of the academic staff comes from the EU funded projects.</p> |
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3.3. Is the research (creation) work of the students, including participation in scientific conferences or activities of artistic creation, planned in and paid for from the budget of the institution of higher education or the college?

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| <b>3</b> | <p>Students are encouraged to participate in research projects undertaken by staff or senior students.</p> <p>Sometimes it is possible to pay students to participate in a research project when it coincides with a summer holiday period. Last year 25 students did summer work while 12 students were involved in field work.</p> <p>To date, there are no PhD students in Tourism but when there are it would be good to organise some student participation in the relevant research.</p> <p>Research work performed by students is performed at a quite high level. In the course of the visit it was observed that Master theses produced by students of the joint study programme were performed at a higher level compared to others. The academic staff and students conduct common research projects. There are students who have participated in scientific conferences at the home university.</p> |
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3.4. Are topics of the scientific research work or creative work of the academic staff relevant and related to the content of the study direction in the respective study programmes?



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| <b>4</b> | <p>Much of the research undertaken by staff members is relevant to the study direction, including the projects on Baltic Region tourism which is conducted in cooperation with Estonian and Lithuanian researchers.</p> <p>Topics of the scientific research work of the academic staff are in line with the contents of the study direction. Over the years high level research on regional development, various aspects of tourism and economics has been conducted by the ViA.</p> |
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3.5. Are topics of the scientific research work or creative work of the students relevant and related to the content of the study direction and respective study programmes?

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| <b>4</b> | <p>The panel saw copies of final year theses and was satisfied they were relevant to the study direction and the respective study programmes. There is some liaison with industry personnel in Latvia which helps to identify possible research projects but the panel would like to see a strengthening of this industry liaison.</p> |
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3.6. Have research outcomes been published in internationally available and reviewed editions (exhibitions, shows, performances, etc.) and used in practice?

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| <b>4</b> | <p>There has been an impressive rate of publication of research output both within Latvia and internationally.</p> <p>There was also an important conference on tourism which was organised by ViA in October 2016 which brought together academics, students and industry personnel. This helps to ensure that the findings of research are adopted in practice.</p> <p>Research outcomes are published regularly internationally and nationally. Elected academic staff, engaged in research, publish their scientific or applied research results in respective academic journals. Research outcomes are also made available on the website of the ViA, which is an example of good practice.</p> |
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3.7. Is the study programme linked to related grants or projects?

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| <b>4</b> | <p>ViA is very active in seeking grants from the EU and from municipalities within Latvia. This relates to both physical developments (new buildings and refurbishment) and to the development of programmes. For example, the development of the Joint Master's degree with Klaipeda University was funded by an EU grant.</p> <p>Study programmes are linked with external grants and projects in a way, that academic staff as well as students are engaged in various research initiatives financed by them.</p> <p>There are joint projects with other study directions, summer schools are organised by tourism and leisure direction, Tourism conference in Valmiera and management simulation game (which involved different study directions).</p> |
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3.8. Other comments, if any, with regard to the implementation of science-based studies in the framework of the study direction.

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| <p>ViA would benefit from the development of some PhD projects in areas closely related to Tourism.</p> |
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#### **IV. Cooperation and Internationalization**

4.1. Do the students in the study direction have the possibility to acquire separate study modules, study courses, or take a traineeship (fully or partially) in the study programmes of other

Latvian institutions of higher education or colleges?

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| <b>2</b> | <p>While it may be theoretically possible for students to acquire credit points by attending other Latvian higher education institutions, it does not happen in practice.</p> <p>Students do not have information about this possibility because HEIs don't have tradition to do that.</p> <p>Students and ViA are very well aware of the possibility of gaining credit points through internships in industry. This happens extensively. In fact all the study programmes in this study direction involve some participation in industry.</p> |
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4.2. Are there any possibilities to acquire separate study modules, study courses or take a traineeship (fully or partially) in the study programmes of foreign institutions of higher education or colleges, for example, are there any cooperation agreements concluded on implementing joint study programmes or study modules, exchange of the academic staff?

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| <b>4</b> | <p>ViA is very much aware of the possibilities of cooperation agreements with foreign institutions. There is a joint degree with Klaipeda University. In addition many students go abroad on the Erasmus+ scheme.</p> <p>The panel met students who had been in Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Poland, and Germany. In 2015/16 there were 61 students who went abroad and 52 foreign students came to ViA.</p> |
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4.3. Is the exchange of the academic staff and the implementation of other cooperation projects taking place?

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| <b>4</b> | <p>There are also exchange programmes for staff. In the academic year 2015/16, there were 17 ViA academic staff who went abroad and 7 staff came to ViA.</p> |
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4.4. Is the international mobility of students, the implementation of ERASMUS and other cooperation projects ensured?

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| <b>4</b> | <p>Yes. See details in 4.2 above.</p> |
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4.5. Does the cooperation with employers' organisations and other partners of cooperation leave any impact upon the implementation of the study direction?

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| <b>3</b> | <p>There is strong informal cooperation with employers and it is significant for the programmes of the study direction. However, the panel would like to see a more formal structure for this cooperation. It recommends the establishment of an Advisory Council for the study direction. Membership of this council should be specified to include the key sectors of employment for graduates of the programmes (including Travel Agencies, Tour Companies, Municipalities, etc.) and a regular schedule of meetings, at least twice a year.</p> |
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4.6. Other comments, if any, regarding the management of the study direction and cooperation with Latvian and international partners.

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| <p>ViA is very active with many partners within Latvia, in the Baltic Region and beyond. It is a policy of ViA that all students should gain work experience in industry as part of their programme.</p> <p>92% of all ViA alumni are employed, more than 50% stay in the Vidzeme region.</p> <p>Also study fees are seen attractive to international students.</p> |
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## V. Quality Assurance and Guarantees

5.1. Does the quality assurance policy, its development and publicity, assessing, whether and to what extent comply with the following requirement: “Institutions of higher education and colleges shall develop policy for quality assurance, which shall be publicly available and form a part of the institution’s strategic management? Internal stakeholders shall develop and implement this policy, by applying appropriate structures and processes, and by involving external stakeholders.”?

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| 2 | <p>ViA has implemented a quality assurance regime which is appropriate. However, one notable absence from the regime is the use of programme committees to ensure full student participation and a speedy resolution to any problems that may arise. So it is recommended that programme committees are established.</p> <p>Normally, there is one programme committee for each programme. In view of the fact that the four study programmes are part of one study direction, ViA may wish to establish a single programme committee that deals with all four programmes. If it decides to do so, it would be important that the committee includes students from each of the programmes.</p> <p>While some aspects of quality assurance are covered, ViA is still missing comprehensive aspects of other directions of quality.</p> <p>It isn’t clear how university carries out feedback to students, and there are mentioned two different feedback methods, but there is no specific method identified. Student questionnaire form is not taken seriously and each lecturer uses their own methodology.</p> |
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5.2. Does the development and approval of study programmes, continuous monitoring of the quality of study programmes, comply, assessing whether and to what extent with the following requirement: “An institution of higher education or a college shall establish mechanisms for the development and approval of study programmes. The programmes shall be developed in a way to make them comply with the aims that have been set, *inter alia*, the intended study outcomes. The qualification to be acquired in the programme shall be clearly defined and explained, and it shall refer to the correct level in the national qualifications infrastructure of higher education and, thus, also to the qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area.”?

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| 2 | <p>In general, the system of developing and approving programmes is satisfactory. But there was concern among panel members about the titles of some degrees. There needs to be certainty about the legal title of all programmes.</p> |
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5.3. Does the ensuring of a student-centred study process, the assessment of students’ performance comply, assessing whether and to what extent with the following requirement: “The institution of higher education or the college shall ensure that the study programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the developing the study process, and the assessment of students shall reflect this approach.”?

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| 3 | <p>ViA is a student-friendly institution and the panel was satisfied that the study process is student-centred. There is extensive use of e-learning platforms (Moodle for Joint Master’s and E-punkts for all other programmes) which assists students. But the inclusion of students in programme committees would increase the role of students in developing the study process.</p> <p>At the same time communication with students was seen as too informal (using Facebook, phone calls at late night and weekends were mentioned).</p> <p>Student Council involvement is rated quite weak concerning the improving of the quality in study process and less educational projects in the organization. One of</p> |
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|  | the reason is low motivation and parallel work for their studies. |
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5.4. Do the rules of admission, studying and graduation, procedures, their publicity and compliance, comply, assessing whether and to what extent, with the following requirement: “The institution of higher education or the college shall consistently apply pre-determined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “lifecycle” - student admission, progression, recognition, and conferring the degree.”?

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| <b>4</b> | The website of ViA gives information on its processes including rules of admission. In addition, the e-learning platform provides extensive advice to students on assessment procedures. |
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5.5. Do the mechanisms for recruiting academic staff and their continuous professional development comply with, assessing whether and to what extent, with the following requirement: “An institution of higher education or a college shall assure themselves of the competence of its teaching staff. Fair and transparent mechanisms shall be used in staff recruitment and professional development.”?

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| <b>3</b> | The procedure for recruiting academic staff is rigorous and includes a trial period. There is a strong commitment to staff development, especially for research and for international cooperation. The one omission in staff development is the lack of a formal, mandatory programme in pedagogy and assessment. It is recommended this is introduced. |
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5.6. Does the management of study information - acquisition of data and use thereof in decision taking comply with, assessing, whether and to what extent the following requirement: “The institution of higher education or the college shall ensure that it collects, analyses, and uses information necessary for effective management of study programmes and other activities.”?

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| <b>3</b> | ViA conducts surveys of student opinion at the end of each semester/module. Teachers are made aware of the analysis of this data and can use the information to make adjustments to their courses. When students were interviewed they indicated that at least one teacher was widely seen as ineffective but despite indicating this in surveys, no action was taken. So ViA management may need to review its follow-up mechanisms. |
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5.7. Does the public published information about the activities of the institution of higher education or the college, the content of information, ways of disseminations and feed-back from society comply, assessing whether and to what extent with the following requirement: “An institution of higher education or a college shall inform about its activities (study programmes including). Information shall be clear, accurate, unbiased, relevant, and easily available.”?

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| <b>4</b> | ViA publishes information on its website and is also active on Facebook and other social media platforms.<br>The broad spectre of information channels for effective communication and management is valued very highly. ViA website, social media, internal system gives opportunity to get necessary information to all students and academic/administrative staff members. |
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5.8. Does the periodic external quality assessment comply, assessing whether and to what extent comply with the following requirement: “An institution of higher education or a college shall conduct periodic external quality assurance.”?

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|  | The study direction for Hotels, Restaurants Tourism and Leisure at ViA had been |
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| <b>4</b> | evaluated 2013 and so were not due for reassessment until 2019. However, the university has submitted them for revaluation in 2017. So it clearly complies with the requirement for periodic external quality assurance. |
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6. The implementation of recommendations received during the previous accreditation, if any.

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| <b>3</b> | <p>ViA has implemented most of the recommendations made at the previous accreditation. One exception was the recommendation to consider merging the two bachelor degree programmes. ViA has stated that due consideration was given to the possibility but it decided against.</p> <p>When current students were interviewed by the panel, they indicated they would not favour the merging of the two programmes.</p> <p>It should be mentioned that provision of part-time studies has not been solved. Also now experts would suggest that employers could be involved more formally in development (in study direction board).</p> |
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## VI. Assessment of a Study Programme I

Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Leisure Organisation

(name of study direction)

Professional bachelor study programme

**Tourist Guide – Travel and Event Manager; code 42812**

(name and code of study programme of relevant study direction)

Note: in the case that the study programme is implemented in several languages, in several forms of studies, particularly as distance learning and at branches, each criterion shall be assessed with regard to each version of the implementation of the study programme.

### Scale of Assessment

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| 1.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme is on an excellent level. The performance is described by an excellent assessment in all issues subject to the particular criterion. Also on this, the highest level of assessment, some minor deficiencies could be detected in connection with the assessment criterion, for the elimination of which major improvements are not required. | 4                   |
| 2.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme is on a good level, complies with all requirements. Strong points dominate, and significant deficiencies are not observed. The deficiencies that have been detected can be easily eliminated.  | 3                   |
| 3.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme meets the minimum requirements. The performance is described by a comparatively high proportion of deficiencies and significant shortcomings with respect to the specific indicator. Detailed planned long-term actions are required to eliminate the shortcomings, as well as stakeholders' support and additional resources.               | 2                   |
| 4.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed the study programme does not meet the minimum requirements, significant deficiencies prevail.   | 1                   |

1. Does the content of the study programme and the degree, professional qualification or the degree and professional qualification to be conferred comply with the name of the study programme?

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| <b>3</b> | <p>The content of the programme and the degree awarded (Professional Bachelor degree) partially comply with the name of the study programme (particularly, event management part).</p> <p>Also there is no clear compatibility between the title and qualification, defined aims and learning outcomes of the professional study programme „Tourist Guide – Travel and Event Manager”.</p> <p>ViA should review the learning outcomes as some were not clear to members of the panel.</p> |
|----------|---|

2. Are the admission rules of the study programme appropriate for the aims and objectives of the study programme?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | <p>The admission rules are appropriate for the aims and objectives of the study programme. They are set out clearly. They include foreign language score in the admission criteria. They also include the score in English as one of the internships is conducted through the medium of English. Foreign applicants must have a score of at least 6.0 in the IELTS test of English.</p> |
|----------|---|

3. Does the content of the study programme comply with the aims and objectives set for the study programme?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>3</b> | <p>The content of the study programme complies with the aims and objectives of the study programme. These aims and objectives and intended learning outcomes were set out clearly in the SER. However, it was felt that the programme is imbalanced with insufficient emphasis on Event Management.</p> <p>The aims and tasks are developed only for the tour guide profession standard, which narrows the contents of the study programme.</p> <p>The study programme has only three courses concerning event management which makes no balance at all between tourist guide and event management.</p> |
|----------|---|

4. Does the content of the study programme comply with the degree, degree and professional qualification or professional qualification (standard of profession) to be conferred, as well as to the requirements of the qualifications framework?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>3</b> | <p>The content of the study programme complies with the qualification (Professional Bachelor Degree) to be conferred. It also complies with the requirements of the Latvian Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework.</p> <p>At the same time assigned qualification is Tour Guide but programme title and content is in Travel and Event Management.</p> |
|----------|---|

5. Does the content of studies in the programmes of academic and doctoral studies comply with the most recent findings in the respective branch of science?

|                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| <b>Not applicable</b> | Not applicable |
|-----------------------|----------------|

6. Does the students' workload in the acquisition of the study programme comply with the work of 40 academic hours per one credit point?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>3</b> | <p>The student workload is acceptable but students and graduates felt that the workload could be increased. They also felt that the workload was sometimes not even between semesters. So it is recommended that the programme management team considers ways in which this problem can be addressed.</p> <p>Based on interviews with students and analysis of syllabus of the programme, the</p> |
|----------|---|

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | workload cannot be evaluated as being in full compliance with 40 academic hours per one credit point. More independent work of students as part of study courses is suggested. |
|--|--|

7. Is the traineeship in professional study programmes related to the theoretical part and complies with its content? Has the organisation and the management of traineeship been developed in a study programme (if it is a professional study programme) in compliance with the aims of the study programme? Have the objectives of the traineeship been clearly defined, and are instructions and rules accessible and controlled?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | There is a strong commitment to practical experience at ViA and all programmes in the study direction contain an element of practice. The panel was impressed with the arrangements for practical experience in this programme which included 10 days in a municipality and an internship in a company. This latter internship is conducted through English. There is also an internship in Hospitality Services which is conducted in collaboration with Valmiera Technical School.<br>The objectives of the traineeship has been very clearly defined but internship process is not very clearly controlled. However, this causes no impact on the internship process. |
|----------|--|

8. Is the plan of the study programme and the content of study courses, and modules of high quality, and comply with the aims and objectives of the study programme and the planned study outcomes?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>3</b> | The plan of the study programme is of high quality and complies with the aims and objectives of the study programme. However, the panel felt that more attention is need to the definition of learning outcomes of Event Management. The study plan includes optional subjects where students have a free choice which allows students to specialise to some extent. Also it is recommended to revise the planned study outcomes because now all aims are focused on the tour guiding. More attention is needed to particularly learning outcomes in event management. |
|----------|--|

9. In the case that the study programme is implemented in the form of distance learning, are there any specially structured study materials, an individualised pace of learning intended in the organisation of the study process, particularly an organised assessment of study achievements, as well as the use of diverse technical and electronic means of communication?

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Not applicable</b> | Not applicable as the programme is not implemented in the form of distance learning. |
|-----------------------|--|

10. Do the admission requirements comply with reaching of study outcomes and does the admission of students proceed in accordance with the approved procedures and criteria?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | The admission requirements comply with reaching the study outcomes. The admission of students proceeds in accordance with the approved procedures and criteria. |
|----------|---|

11. Is there any possibility to recognise prior non-formal education and professional experience, and is it used?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | There is a published policy in ViA on the recognition of prior non-formal education. And this policy is implemented. |
|----------|--|

12. Do the final theses or other indicators prove that the study outcomes have been reached? Is

this approved by the graduates of the study programme and employers?

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 3 | <p>The final theses are generally on topics which are relevant to the aims and objectives of the study programme.</p> <p>During the visit to ViA, members of the panel were able to read some sample theses. It was the view of the panel that there was scope for improvement in the theses in terms of the sources quoted by students in the thesis and in the bibliographies of the theses.</p> <p>The thesis are assessed by employers who serve on the commission for the final examinations. It is also possible for employers to suggest topics for theses.</p> <p>The panel suggests that a more formal structure of the advisory committee of employers in ViA could lead to a stronger flow of good topics for theses.</p> |
|---|--|

13. Does the development, approval and update of programmes take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 3 | <p>The management of ViA maintains that every syllabus is reviewed every year and that changes are made where justified. The panel could not see clear evidence of this procedure and in particular of appropriate involvement of students and industry personnel in such a procedure. It is recommended that ViA reviews its approach to the updating of programmes.</p> |
|---|---|

14. Does the planning and supervision of the learning (study) process, the acquisition of the programme and quality control take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 3 | <p>The procedures for planning and supervision of the study process and the implementation of quality control is generally good. But it would be improved by the introduction of a Programme Committee (or equivalent Study Direction Committee) which brings together some teachers and at least one student from each year of the programme.</p> |
|---|--|

15. Does the development, update and use of study course descriptions take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 3 | <p>Yes. There is a procedure in place whereby each syllabus is reviewed each year and updated where necessary. But there could be better involvement of stakeholders including industry personnel and students.</p> <p>Panel didn't get the clear answer to questions about who approves the study course descriptions.</p> |
|---|---|

16. Is the professionalism of the academic staff of the institution of higher education or the college involved in the implementation of study programme sufficiently high for the implementation of high quality studies, in the view of professional qualification in the respective sector and didactics of higher education? Do the faculty members have sufficient level proficiency in English or in other foreign languages to prepare and implement a study programme or a separate part thereof in a foreign language?

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 4 | <p>The professionalism of the academic staff is at a high level for both teaching and research. The only improvement suggested by the panel is that a mandatory course in pedagogy and assessment be provided for all new staff. The standard of English is very good among academic staff.</p> |
|---|---|

17. Is the methodological and informative provision of the study programme, including library



books, periodicals and electronic resources, sufficient for implementing studies based on relevant scientific findings and requirements of the professional field and for the development of scientific research? Does it comply with the provisions of regulatory enactments that regulate the respective professions? Is the mandatory literature included in course descriptions available at the library in sufficient quantity?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | <p>The library facilities at ViA are very good, especially in regard to tourism studies as ViA is a depository library for World Tourism Organisation (WTO) publications. The books are available in sufficient number and there is very good on-line access.</p> <p>The student and graduates of the programme were very satisfied with facilities at ViA. ViA makes extensive use of e-learning platforms, mainly E-punkts for most programmes and it is much appreciated by students of this programme.</p> <p>The question of mandatory literature is solved by possibility to scan needed amount of copies or other materials.</p> |
|----------|---|

18. Do the material technical provisions for the study programme, for example, specific laboratories, equipment, studios, comply with the requirements of the study programme to be implemented in the framework of the study programme and the development level of contemporary technologies?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | <p>Resources are quite adequate to support teaching and research on the main campus. But more use could be made of the advanced facilities available for research at the Terbatas Street campus of ViA. Students need to be made aware of these facilities. It was mentioned that lecture rooms are not fully provided with sockets and writing materials.</p> |
|----------|--|

19. Does the compliance and improvement of the infrastructure, informative and technical provision necessary for the implementation of programmes proceed in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | <p>The management at ViA has an impressive plan for the development of facilities and is proceeding with the implementation of that plan. It depends strongly on EU funding.</p> |
|----------|--|

20. Is the study programme sustainable in view of the employment of graduates?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | <p>Study programme is sustainable in the view of employment because between 92% and 95% of graduates are employed. A very high percentage of graduates have got jobs but it was not clear that the jobs were at an appropriately high level. The graduates who met the panel were satisfied but suggested that the programme might contain some discussion on career possibilities after they graduate.</p> |
|----------|---|

21. The implementation of recommendations (if any given) received in the framework of the previous accreditation of a study direction (if any) or licensing the study programme.

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | <p>There were three recommendations from the previous accreditation: 1) possibility of merging the two Bachelor degree programmes, 2) more research by students and 3) more foreign guest lecturers.</p> <p>The possible merger has been addressed by ViA management who concluded it would not be a good idea.</p> <p>The involvement of students in research has been increased by their participation in scientific conferences.</p> <p>And finally, there is now an impressive list of foreign guest lecturers, with 10</p> |
|----------|---|

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | expected this year from Armenia, Estonia, India, Lithuania, Hungary and Germany. |
|--|--|

22. Recommended measures and tasks to be mandatorily performed for eliminating the deficiencies and shortcomings that have been detected for the improvement and development of the study programme.

**The panel recommends:**

1. *The establishment of a Programme Committee (or one at study direction level) which includes teachers and students from each year of the programme;*
2. *The introduction of a mandatory training programme in pedagogy and assessment for all new teachers;*
3. *A review by the programme management of the imbalance between Tour Guiding and Event Management;*
4. *A review of learning outcomes and evaluation criteria in some study courses, because now in some parts there is a theoretical risk of subjective evaluation;*
5. *A review by the programme management of the subject Philosophy as students have doubts about its relevance.*
6. *The student workload is acceptable but students and graduates felt that the workload could be increased. They also felt that the workload was sometimes not even between semesters. So it is recommended that the programme management team considers ways in which this problem can be addressed. Based on interviews with students and analysis of syllabus of the programme, the workload cannot be evaluated as being in full compliance with 40 academic hours per one credit point. More independent work of students as part of study courses is suggested.*
7. *Management should review overlapping between study courses which was mentioned by students. Student skills in informatics should be increased (especially in Excel type programme) which was mentioned by employers.*

23. Other information, comments by the committee for the assessment of a study direction or an individual expert.

See comment below in Section 23 on Page 31.

## VII. Assessment of a Study Programme II

Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Leisure Organisation

(name of study direction)

Professional bachelor study programme

**Tourism Organisation and Management; code 42812**

(name and code of study programme of relevant study direction)

Note: in the case that the study programme is implemented in several languages, in several forms of studies, particularly as distance learning and at branches, each criterion shall be assessed with regard to each version of the implementation of the study programme.

### Scale of Assessment

| No. | Explanation of assessment of study programme | Assessment |
|-----|--|------------|
|-----|--|------------|

|    |  | (points) |
|----|--|----------|
| 1. | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme is on an excellent level. The performance is described by an excellent assessment in all issues subject to the particular criterion. Also on this, the highest level of assessment, some minor deficiencies could be detected in connection with the assessment criterion, for the elimination of which major improvements are not required. | 4        |
| 2. | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme is on a good level, complies with all requirements. Strong points dominate, and significant deficiencies are not observed. The deficiencies that have been detected can be easily eliminated.  | 3        |
| 3. | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme meets the minimum requirements. The performance is described by a comparatively high proportion of deficiencies and significant shortcomings with respect to the specific indicator. Detailed planned long-term actions are required to eliminate the shortcomings, as well as stakeholders' support and additional resources.               | 2        |
| 4. | In the context of the criterion to be assessed the study programme does not meet the minimum requirements, significant deficiencies prevail.   | 1        |

1. Does the content of the study programme and the degree, professional qualification or the degree and professional qualification to be conferred comply with the name of the study programme?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | The content of the programme and the degree awarded comply with the name of the study programme. |
|----------|--|

2. Are the admission rules of the study programme appropriate for the aims and objectives of the study programme?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | The admission rules are appropriate for the aims and objectives of the study programme. They include foreign language score in the admission criteria. |
|----------|--|

3. Does the content of the study programme comply with the aims and objectives set for the study programme?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | The content of the study programme complies with the aims and objectives of the study programme. These aims and objectives and intended learning outcomes were set out clearly in the SER. |
|----------|--|

4. Does the content of the study programme comply with the degree, degree and professional qualification or professional qualification (standard of profession) to be conferred, as well as to the requirements of the qualifications framework?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | The content of the study programme complies with the qualification (Professional Bachelor Degree) to be conferred. It also complies with the requirements of the Latvian Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework. |
|----------|--|

5. Does the content of studies in the programmes of academic and doctoral studies comply with the most recent findings in the respective branch of science?

|                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| <b>Not applicable</b> | Not applicable |
|-----------------------|----------------|

6. Does the students' workload in the acquisition of the study programme comply with the work of 40 academic hours per one credit point?

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | The student workload is acceptable but students and graduates felt that the |
|--|---|

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>3</b> | workload could be increased. They also felt that the workload was sometimes not even between semesters. So it is recommended that the programme management team considers ways in which this problem can be addressed. |
|----------|--|

7. Is the traineeship in professional study programmes related to the theoretical part and complies with its content? Has the organisation and the management of traineeship been developed in a study programme (if it is a professional study programme) in compliance with the aims of the study programme? Have the objectives of the traineeship been clearly defined, and are instructions and rules accessible and controlled?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>3</b> | There is a strong commitment to practical experience at ViA and all programmes in the study direction contain an element of practice. But the panel felt that the current arrangements for practice should be reviewed to see if they could be made more coherent and less scattered.<br>Panel recommends that ViA management assesses the possibility of arranging internships in different divisions each (hospitality, agencies, TIC) which was mentioned by employers. |
|----------|--|

8. Is the plan of the study programme and the content of study courses, and modules of high quality, and comply with the aims and objectives of the study programme and the planned study outcomes?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | The plan of the study programme is of high quality and complies with the aims and objectives of the study programme. The study plan includes optional subjects where students have a free choice which allows students to specialise to some extent. |
|----------|--|

9. In the case that the study programme is implemented in the form of distance learning, are there any specially structured study materials, an individualised pace of learning intended in the organisation of the study process, particularly an organised assessment of study achievements, as well as the use of diverse technical and electronic means of communication?

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Not applicable</b> | Not applicable as the programme is not implemented in the form of distance learning. |
|-----------------------|--|

10. Do the admission requirements comply with reaching of study outcomes and does the admission of students proceed in accordance with the approved procedures and criteria?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | The admission requirements comply with reaching the study outcomes. The admission of students proceeds in accordance with the approved procedures and criteria. |
|----------|---|

11. Is there any possibility to recognise prior non-formal education and professional experience, and is it used?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | There is a published policy in ViA on the recognition of prior non-formal education. And this policy is implemented. |
|----------|--|

12. Do the final theses or other indicators prove that the study outcomes have been reached? Is this approved by the graduates of the study programme and employers?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>3</b> | The final theses are generally on topics which are relevant to the aims and objectives of the study programme. During the visit to ViA, members of the panel were able to read some sample theses. It was the view of the panel that there was |
|----------|--|

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>scope for improvement in the theses in terms of the sources quoted by students in the thesis and in the bibliographies of the theses.</p> <p>The theses are assessed by employers who serve on the commission for the final examinations. It is also possible for employers to suggest topics for theses. The panel suggests that a more formal structure of the advisory committee of employers in ViA could lead to a stronger flow of good topics for theses.</p> |
|--|---|

13. Does the development, approval and update of programmes take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 3 | <p>The management of ViA maintains that every syllabus is reviewed every year and that changes are made where justified. The panel could not see clear evidence of this procedure and in particular of appropriate involvement of students and industry personnel in such a procedure. It is recommended that ViA reviews its approach to the updating of programmes.</p> <p>The panel had concern about the length of the study programme, which was specified as 3.5 years in the list of the study programmes included in the application of the university; Latvian law indicates that it should be 4 year studies meanwhile, the duration of this study programme was specified 8 semesters in the SER itself.</p> <p>Explanation:</p> <p>According to the Minister Cabinet Regulations of 2 December 2008 No. 990 "Regulations on the Classification of the Latvian Education" (Annex 1) "Second level higher professional education (fifth level professional qualification and professional bachelor degree) or second level higher professional education (fifth level professional qualification), has to be implemented after the completion of general or professional secondary education. The duration of full-time studies is 4 years."</p> <p>In the application submitted by ViA in 2012, the duration of studies is specified as 8 semesters that correspond to 4 years and 160 CP. And, the seventh semester is indicated as the summer internship (application dated 10 October, 2016).</p> <p>According to Part 2 of Section 57 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the duration of full-time studies for the acquisition of the fifth-level professional qualification shall not be less than four years, except those professional study programmes, which are implemented after the acquisition of the programme of a college. A professional higher education bachelor degree shall be assigned if the duration of a programme of full-time studies is at least four years. The amount of CPs is 160:</p> <p>1) The amount of CPs is 160. Taking into account that 1 CP equals a measure unit of studies and corresponds to the amount of a student workload, which is 40 academic hours (1 week), it is considered that the demand for the studies duration is satisfied; however, this calculation does not comply with a calendar year (but complies with weeks: 4 years = 8 semesters);</p> <p>2) A decision of 3.5 years was taken before, and a shorter period of studies was approved. According to Section 6 of the Administrative Procedure Law, "In matters where there are identical factual and legal circumstances, institutions and courts shall adopt identical decisions (in matters where there are different factual or legal circumstances – different decisions) irrespective of the gender, age, race, skin colour, language, religious beliefs, political or other views, social origin, nationality, education, social and financial status, type of occupation or other circumstances of participants in the administrative proceedings."</p> <p>Thus, if the total duration of studies is 8 semesters and the amount of CPs is 160,</p> |
|---|---|

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | the demand for the duration of studies (4 years = 8 semesters) is satisfied as such. It can be considered that the duration of studies is 4 years; however, because of the organization of the study process (studies are provided in summer, but it is a specific feature in this industry), the implementation of studies is not provided within the period of 4 calendar years. |
|--|--|

14. Does the planning and supervision of the learning (study) process, the acquisition of the programme and quality control take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>3</b> | The procedures for planning and supervision of the study process and the implementation of quality control is generally good. But it would be improved by the introduction of a Programme Committee (or equivalent Study Direction Committee) which brings together some teachers and at least one student from each year of the programme. |
|----------|---|

15. Does the development, update and use of study course descriptions take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>3</b> | Yes. There is a procedure in place whereby each syllabus is reviewed each year and updated where necessary. But there could be better involvement of stakeholders including industry personnel and students. |
|----------|--|

16. Is the professionalism of the academic staff of the institution of higher education or the college involved in the implementation of study programme sufficiently high for the implementation of high quality studies, in the view of professional qualification in the respective sector and didactics of higher education? Do the faculty members have sufficient level proficiency in English or in other foreign languages to prepare and implement a study programme or a separate part thereof in a foreign language?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | The professionalism of the academic staff is at a high level for both teaching and research. The only improvement suggested by the panel is that a mandatory course in pedagogy and assessment be provided for all new staff. The standard of English is very good among academic staff. |
|----------|--|

17. Is the methodological and informative provision of the study programme, including library books, periodicals and electronic resources, sufficient for implementing studies based on relevant scientific findings and requirements of the professional field and for the development of scientific research? Does it comply with the provisions of regulatory enactments that regulate the respective professions? Is the mandatory literature included in course descriptions available at the library in sufficient quantity?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | <p>The library facilities at ViA are very good, especially in regard to tourism studies as ViA is a depository library for World Tourism Organisation (WTO) publications.</p> <p>The books are available in sufficient number and there is very good on-line access. The student and graduates of the programme were very satisfied with facilities at ViA</p> <p>ViA makes extensive use of e-learning platforms, mainly e-point for most programmes and it is much appreciated by students of this programme.</p> <p>The question of mandatory literature is solved by possibility to scan needed amount of copies or other materials.</p> |
|----------|--|

18. Do the material technical provisions for the study programme, for example, specific



laboratories, equipment, studios, comply with the requirements of the study programme to be implemented in the framework of the study programme and the development level of contemporary technologies?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | Resources are quite adequate but more use could be made of the advanced facilities available for research at the Terbatas Street campus of ViA. Students need to be made aware of these facilities. |
|----------|---|

19. Does the compliance and improvement of the infrastructure, informative and technical provision necessary for the implementation of programmes proceed in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | The management at ViA has an impressive plan for the development of facilities and is proceeding with the implementation of that plan. It depends strongly on EU funding. |
|----------|---|

20. Is the study programme sustainable in view of the employment of graduates?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | A very high percentage of graduates have got jobs but it was not clear that the jobs were at an appropriately high level.<br>The graduates who met the panel were satisfied but suggested some changes which might increase the employment prospects. These included more eco-tourism, more active tourism, more dark tourism and more nature tourism. |
|----------|--|

21. The implementation of recommendations (if any given) received in the framework of the previous accreditation of a study direction (if any) or licensing the study programme.

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | There were three recommendations from the previous accreditation: 1) possibility of merging the two Bachelor degree programmes, 2) workload to be spread more evenly and 3) more foreign guest lecturers.<br>The possible merger has been addressed by ViA management who concluded it would not be a good idea.<br>There are still some issues around balancing the workload.<br>And finally, there is now an impressive list of foreign guest lecturers. |
|----------|--|

22. Recommended measures and tasks to be mandatorily performed for eliminating the deficiencies and shortcomings that have been detected for the improvement and development of the study programme.

**The panel recommends:**

1. *The establishment of a Programme Committee (or one at study direction level) which includes teachers and students from each year of the programme;*
2. *The introduction of a mandatory training programme in pedagogy and assessment for all new teachers;*
3. *An intensification of the interaction between ViA and industry personnel. It is hoped that one outcome of this interaction will be the development of many projects based in industry which are suitable subjects for student Bachelor theses;*
4. *Students have difficulty with the subject Finance so the programme management should review it.*

23. Other information, comments by the committee for the assessment of a study direction or an individual expert.

See comment below in Section 23 on Page 31.

### **VIII. Assessment of a Study Programme III**

Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Leisure Organisation

(name of study direction)

Professional master study programme  
**Strategic Tourism Management; code 47812**

(name and code of study programme of relevant study direction)

Note: in the case that the study programme is implemented in several languages, in several forms of studies, particularly as distance learning and at branches, each criterion shall be assessed with regard to each version of the implementation of the study programme.

#### **Scale of Assessment**

| No. | Explanation of assessment of study programme   | Assessment (points) |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme is on an excellent level. The performance is described by an excellent assessment in all issues subject to the particular criterion. Also on this, the highest level of assessment, some minor deficiencies could be detected in connection with the assessment criterion, for the elimination of which major improvements are not required. | 4                   |
| 2.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme is on a good level, complies with all requirements. Strong points dominate, and significant deficiencies are not observed. The deficiencies that have been detected can be easily eliminated.  | 3                   |
| 3.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme meets the minimum requirements. The performance is described by a comparatively high proportion of deficiencies and significant shortcomings with respect to the specific indicator. Detailed planned long-term actions are required to eliminate the shortcomings, as well as stakeholders' support and additional resources.               | 2                   |
| 4.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed the study programme does not meet the minimum requirements, significant deficiencies prevail.   | 1                   |

1. Does the content of the study programme and the degree, professional qualification or the degree and professional qualification to be conferred comply with the name of the study programme?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | The panel was satisfied that the content of the Master's degree programme complies with the name of the programme. |
|----------|--|

2. Are the admission rules of the study programme appropriate for the aims and objectives of the study programme?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | The admission rules are appropriate for the programme. Because students may come from different backgrounds as regards their Bachelor degree programme, it is appropriate that the duration of the Master's degree programme should vary (2 or 1.5 years studies). Students who have not previously studied Tourism require a longer internship in the programme |
|----------|--|

3. Does the content of the study programme comply with the aims and objectives set for the study programme?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | The content of the programme is well documented in the SER and it complies with the aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the programme. |
|----------|--|

4. Does the content of the study programme comply with the degree, degree and professional qualification or professional qualification (standard of profession) to be conferred, as well as to the requirements of the qualifications framework?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | The content of the study programme complies with the professional Master's degree to be conferred. The title of the degree is master's degree in Business Administration. It also complies with the requirements of the qualifications framework. |
|----------|---|

5. Does the content of studies in the programmes of academic and doctoral studies comply with the most recent findings in the respective branch of science?

|                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| <b>Not applicable</b> | Not applicable |
|-----------------------|----------------|

6. Does the students' workload in the acquisition of the study programme comply with the work of 40 academic hours per one credit point?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>3</b> | There are two levels of volume of credit points, either 60CP or 80CP, the latter applying if the student is required to undertake a Pre-Diploma Internship for 20 CP.<br>It is not clearly indicated in the SER that the student workload equals 40 academic hours per credit point. |
|----------|--|

7. Is the traineeship in professional study programmes related to the theoretical part and complies with its content? Has the organisation and the management of traineeship been developed in a study programme (if it is a professional study programme) in compliance with the aims of the study programme? Have the objectives of the traineeship been clearly defined, and are instructions and rules accessible and controlled?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | There is provision in the programme for a traineeship. The length of the traineeship depends on whether the student has previously completed relevant work experience in the Tourism industry or not. If the student has previous experience, the traineeship is for 6 weeks; if no previous experience, an additional pre-diploma traineeship of 20 weeks must be completed.<br>The panel was satisfied with this policy and with the rules which governed traineeships. The objectives of the traineeship are clearly described in the SER and the rules governing the traineeship are clearly set out. |
|----------|---|

8. Is the plan of the study programme and the content of study courses, and modules of high quality, and comply with the aims and objectives of the study programme and the planned study outcomes?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | <p>The plan of the study programme and the content of modules is of an appropriate high quality. The graduates who spoke to the panel were impressive. Some students said they had particular difficulty with the subject “Basics of Finance Management” so the programme management should address that particular problem.</p> <p>According to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 512 of 26 August, 2014 “Regulations on the State Standard of the Second Level Professional Higher Education”, if the requirements with regard to health and safety issues have not been met (a student has not completed such a course in a lower-level study programme), students have to complete these courses in addition to their Master’s study programme.</p> |
|----------|--|

9. In the case that the study programme is implemented in the form of distance learning, are there any specially structured study materials, an individualised pace of learning intended in the organisation of the study process, particularly an organised assessment of study achievements, as well as the use of diverse technical and electronic means of communication?

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Not applicable</b> | Not applicable as the programme is not implemented in the form of distance learning. |
|-----------------------|--|

10. Do the admission requirements comply with reaching of study outcomes and does the admission of students proceed in accordance with the approved procedures and criteria?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | Admission requirements include a test and the use of students’ average mark in Bachelor degree. It seemed to the panel to be appropriate. |
|----------|---|

11. Is there any possibility to recognise prior non-formal education and professional experience, and is it used?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | Yes, ViA has a policy on the recognition of prior non-formal education which is clearly set out in the SER. It is certainly used to at least some extent when deciding whether a student is required to complete a Pre-Diploma traineeship. |
|----------|---|

12. Do the final theses or other indicators prove that the study outcomes have been reached? Is this approved by the graduates of the study programme and employers?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>3</b> | Some samples of student theses were seen. It was felt that some were too light in regard to their review of literature. There were not enough good quality citations and consequently the bibliography was not good. Some further attention should be paid to improving the quality of theses by the programme management. |
|----------|--|

13. Does the development, approval and update of programmes take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>3</b> | The management of ViA maintains that every syllabus is reviewed every year and that changes are made where justified. The panel could not see clear evidence of this procedure and in particular of appropriate involvement of students and industry personnel in such a procedure. It is recommended that ViA reviews its approach to the updating of programmes. |
|----------|--|

14. Does the planning and supervision of the learning (study) process, the acquisition of the programme and quality control take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>3</b> | The procedures for planning and supervision of the study process and the implementation of quality control is generally good. But it would be improved by the introduction of a Programme Committee (or equivalent Study Direction Committee) which brings together some teachers and at least one student from each year of the programme. |
|----------|---|

15. Does the development, update and use of study course descriptions take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | Yes. Each syllabus is reviewed each year and updated where necessary. But there could be better involvement of stakeholders including industry personnel and students. |
|----------|--|

16. Is the professionalism of the academic staff of the institution of higher education or the college involved in the implementation of study programme sufficiently high for the implementation of high quality studies, in the view of professional qualification in the respective sector and didactics of higher education? Do the faculty members have sufficient level proficiency in English or in other foreign languages to prepare and implement a study programme or a separate part thereof in a foreign language?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | The professionalism of the academic staff is at a high level for both teaching and research. The only improvement suggested by the panel is that a mandatory course in pedagogy and assessment be provided for all new staff. The standard of English is very good. |
|----------|---|

17. Is the methodological and informative provision of the study programme, including library books, periodicals and electronic resources, sufficient for implementing studies based on relevant scientific findings and requirements of the professional field and for the development of scientific research? Does it comply with the provisions of regulatory enactments that regulate the respective professions? Is the mandatory literature included in course descriptions available at the library in sufficient quantity?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | <p>The library facilities at ViA are very good, especially in regard to tourism studies as ViA is a depository library for World Tourism Organisation (WTO) publications.</p> <p>The books are available in sufficient number and there is very good on-line access. The student and graduates of the programme were very satisfied with facilities at ViA.</p> <p>ViA makes extensive use of e-learning platforms, mainly E-punkts for most programmes.</p> <p>The question of mandatory literature is solved by possibility to scan needed amount of copies or other materials.</p> |
|----------|---|

18. Do the material technical provisions for the study programme, for example, specific laboratories, equipment, studios, comply with the requirements of the study programme to be implemented in the framework of the study programme and the development level of contemporary technologies?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | Resources are quite adequate but more use could be made of the advanced facilities available for research at the Terbatas Street campus of ViA. Students need to be made aware of these facilities. |
|----------|---|

19. Does the compliance and improvement of the infrastructure, informative and technical provision necessary for the implementation of programmes proceed in accordance with the

procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 4 | The management at ViA has an impressive plan for the development of facilities and is proceeding with the implementation of that plan. It depends strongly on EU funding. |
|---|---|

20. Is the study programme sustainable in view of the employment of graduates?

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 4 | A very high percentage of graduates have got jobs but it was not clear that the jobs were at an appropriately high level. However, the graduates who met the panel were satisfied and suggested some changes which might increase the employment prospects. These included more eco-tourism, more active tourism, more dark tourism and more nature tourism.<br>The programme management should review how some or all of these wishes can be accommodated, and it might be sufficient if the Master's thesis was in such an area. |
|---|--|

21. The implementation of recommendations (if any given) received in the framework of the previous accreditation of a study direction (if any) or licensing the study programme.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 4 | Key recommendations made by the previous review panel in 2012 were that 1) staff research activity should be increased, 2) cooperation agreements outside Latvia should be developed and 3) the quality of student theses should be enhanced.<br>ViA has made good progress on all these recommendations though further progress on the quality of theses is needed. |
|---|--|

22. Recommended measures and tasks to be mandatorily performed for eliminating the deficiencies and shortcomings that have been detected for the improvement and development of the study programme.

**The panel recommends:**

1. *The establishment of a Programme Committee (or one at study direction level) which includes teachers and students from each year of the programme.*
2. *The introduction of a mandatory training programme in pedagogy and assessment for all new teachers;*
3. *An intensification of the interaction between ViA and industry personnel. It is hoped that one outcome of this interaction will be the development of many projects based in industry which are suitable subjects for Master's theses;*
4. *Introduce students with academic writing module which was mentioned by students.*

23. Other information, comments by the committee for the assessment of a study direction or an individual expert.

See comment below in Section 23 on Page 31.

## **IX. Assessment of a Study Programme IV**

Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Leisure Organisation

(name of study direction)



Academic master study programme  
**International Tourism Events Management; code 45812**

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(name and code of study programme of relevant study direction)

Note: in the case that the study programme is implemented in several languages, in several forms of studies, particularly as distance learning and at branches, each criterion shall be assessed with regard to each version of the implementation of the study programme.

**Scale of Assessment**

| No. | Explanation of assessment of study programme   | Assessment (points) |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme is on an excellent level. The performance is described by an excellent assessment in all issues subject to the particular criterion. Also on this, the highest level of assessment, some minor deficiencies could be detected in connection with the assessment criterion, for the elimination of which major improvements are not required. | 4                   |
| 2.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme is on a good level, complies with all requirements. Strong points dominate, and significant deficiencies are not observed. The deficiencies that have been detected can be easily eliminated.  | 3                   |
| 3.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme meets the minimum requirements. The performance is described by a comparatively high proportion of deficiencies and significant shortcomings with respect to the specific indicator. Detailed planned long-term actions are required to eliminate the shortcomings, as well as stakeholders' support and additional resources.               | 2                   |
| 4.  | In the context of the criterion to be assessed the study programme does not meet the minimum requirements, significant deficiencies prevail.   | 1                   |

1. Does the content of the study programme and the degree, professional qualification or the degree and professional qualification to be conferred comply with the name of the study programme?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | Yes, the panel was satisfied that the content of the Master's degree programme complies with the name of the programme. |
|----------|---|

2. Are the admission rules of the study programme appropriate for the aims and objectives of the study programme?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | The admission requirements are appropriate. In this respect, the requirements for English language competency are important since the programme is taught through English in the two partner universities, one in Lithuania and one in Latvia. |
|----------|--|

3. Does the content of the study programme comply with the aims and objectives set for the study programme?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | The content of the programme is very well documented in the SER and it complies with the aims, objectives and learning outcomes set for the programme. |
|----------|--|

4. Does the content of the study programme comply with the degree, degree and professional qualification or professional qualification (standard of profession) to be conferred, as well as to the requirements of the qualifications framework?

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | The content complies with a Master's degree and with the requirements of the |
|--|--|

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>3</b> | qualifications framework.<br>The science field for academic programme is not clear (Master's Degree in Tourism and Recreation). |
|----------|---|

5. Does the content of studies in the programmes of academic and doctoral studies comply with the most recent findings in the respective branch of science?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | The content of this academic Master's degree complies with the most recent findings in Tourism research. The staff members involved are research active and have extensive publications. |
|----------|--|

6. Does the students' workload in the acquisition of the study programme comply with the work of 40 academic hours per one credit point?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | The student workload has been calculated at 2,400 hours of which 25% are contact hours (see pages 57 and 58 of SER). The degree is awarded on the basis of 90 ECTS earned by the student, which equals 60 Credit Points. Thus, 40 hours per CP. |
|----------|---|

7. Is the traineeship in professional study programmes related to the theoretical part and complies with its content? Has the organisation and the management of traineeship been developed in a study programme (if it is a professional study programme) in compliance with the aims of the study programme? Have the objectives of the traineeship been clearly defined, and are instructions and rules accessible and controlled?

|                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| <b>Not applicable</b> | Not applicable |
|-----------------------|----------------|

8. Is the plan of the study programme and the content of study courses, and modules of high quality, and comply with the aims and objectives of the study programme and the planned study outcomes?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>3</b> | The plan of the study programme and the content of modules is of an appropriate high quality. The graduates who spoke to the panel were impressive.<br>But was some concern that the programme may not comply with Latvian national regulations (e.g. on need for a Health and Safety module). Panel stresses that it is not clear why Master thesis is divided in three parts and why the same work has been evaluated twice (Master thesis I, II).<br>According to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 240 of 13 May, 2014 "Regulations on State Academic Education Standard", if the requirements with regard to health and safety issues have not been met (a student has not completed such a course in a lower-level study programme), students have to complete these courses in addition to their Master's study programme. |
|----------|---|

9. In the case that the study programme is implemented in the form of distance learning, are there any specially structured study materials, an individualised pace of learning intended in the organisation of the study process, particularly an organised assessment of study achievements, as well as the use of diverse technical and electronic means of communication?

|                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| <b>Not applicable</b> | Not applicable |
|-----------------------|----------------|

10. Do the admission requirements comply with reaching of study outcomes and does the admission of students proceed in accordance with the approved procedures and criteria?

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | Yes, the admission requirements comply with reaching the learning outcomes |
|--|--|

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | and admission of students proceeds in accordance with approved procedures and criteria.<br>There has been a problem of non-completion of the Master's thesis by some international students who do not have the experience that a Latvian or Lithuanian student would have from completing a Bachelor's thesis. This problem should be addressed either by requiring students to have prior experience of thesis writing or by the provision of a support module for students who need it. |
|----------|--|

11. Is there any possibility to recognise prior non-formal education and professional experience, and is it used?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | Yes, ViA has a published scheme for the recognition of prior non-formal education and professional experience. It is certainly used to some extent. |
|----------|---|

12. Do the final theses or other indicators prove that the study outcomes have been reached? Is this approved by the graduates of the study programme and employers?

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | The panel saw some of the final theses and was satisfied that the learning outcomes had been reached. There is however, room for improvement in the extent to which some students include appropriate references and a bibliography. This should be addressed, but, on the whole, there were a couple of such cases against the volume of works seen.<br>Employers are involved in this process as they serve on the commission which assesses the final theses.<br>Some samples of student theses were seen. It was felt that some were too light in regard to their review of literature. There were not enough good quality citations and consequently the bibliography was not good. Some further attention should be paid to improving the quality of theses by the programme management. However, the described issues do not impact the overall situation, and these are minor deficiencies. |
|----------|---|

13. Does the development, approval and update of programmes take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>3</b> | There is a Strategic Advisory Board in place which includes Teachers, Industry personnel, Governance representatives and alumni and this board advises on developments. To date there has not been much experience of its success as the programme commenced in September 2014 so only one cohort has graduated. But there are appropriate mechanisms in place.<br>Panel had no evidence for common procedure between both universities (ViA, KU) for an approval of changes in the programme. |
|----------|--|

14. Does the planning and supervision of the learning (study) process, the acquisition of the programme and quality control take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | Yes, planning and supervision of the study process and quality control take place in accordance with the management of the study direction. Although this programme leads to a Joint Degree of Klaipeda University and Vidzeme University, it is agreed that ViA should take the lead in programme management. |
|----------|--|

15. Does the development, update and use of study course descriptions take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 4 | Yes. Each syllabus is reviewed each year and updated where necessary. |
|---|---|

16. Is the professionalism of the academic staff of the institution of higher education or the college involved in the implementation of study programme sufficiently high for the implementation of high quality studies, in the view of professional qualification in the respective sector and didactics of higher education? Do the faculty members have sufficient level proficiency in English or in other foreign languages to prepare and implement a study programme or a separate part thereof in a foreign language?

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 4 | <p>The professionalism of the academic staff is at a high level for both teaching and research.</p> <p>Lecturers should be selected more carefully for the current study programme, as students mentioned that there are some problems in the Klaipeda University staff selection.</p> <p>The only improvement suggested by the panel is that a mandatory course in pedagogy and assessment be provided for all new staff. The standard of English is very good.</p> |
|---|--|

17. Is the methodological and informative provision of the study programme, including library books, periodicals and electronic resources, sufficient for implementing studies based on relevant scientific findings and requirements of the professional field and for the development of scientific research? Does it comply with the provisions of regulatory enactments that regulate the respective professions? Is the mandatory literature included in course descriptions available at the library in sufficient quantity?

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 4 | <p>The library facilities at ViA are very good, especially in regard to tourism studies as ViA is a depository library for World Tourism Organisation (WTO) publications.</p> <p>The books are available in sufficient number and there is very good on-line access. The panel did not visit the library at Klaipeda University (KU) but the chair of the panel has reviewed facilities there and reported that they are excellent. The student and graduates of the programme were very satisfied with facilities at KU.</p> <p>ViA makes extensive use of e-learning platforms, mainly E-punkts for most programmes but Moodle for this programme (to harmonise with KU). It is much appreciated by students of this programme. The panel questioned whether it involved an unnecessary complication to have two e-learning platforms but the students and teachers did not see it as a problem.</p> |
|---|--|

18. Do the material technical provisions for the study programme, for example, specific laboratories, equipment, studios, comply with the requirements of the study programme to be implemented in the framework of the study programme and the development level of contemporary technologies?

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 4 | Yes, they comply but more use could be made of the advanced facilities available for research at the Terbatas Street campus of ViA. |
|---|---|

19. Does the compliance and improvement of the infrastructure, informative and technical provision necessary for the implementation of programmes proceed in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | The management at ViA has an impressive plan for the development of facilities |
|--|--|

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>4</b> | in Valmiera and is proceeding with the implementation of that plan. |
|----------|---|

20. Is the study programme sustainable in view of the employment of graduates?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | A very high percentage of graduates have got jobs but there has only been one cohort of graduates to date. |
|----------|--|

21. The implementation of recommendations (if any given) received in the framework of the previous accreditation of a study direction (if any) or licensing the study programme.

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Not applicable</b> | There was no previous review of this programme.<br>Licensed on March 14, 2014, licence No. 04031/21. |
|-----------------------|--|

22. Recommended measures and tasks to be mandatorily performed for eliminating the deficiencies and shortcomings that have been detected for the improvement and development of the study programme.

**The panel recommends:**

- 1. The establishment of a Programme Committee (or one at study direction level) which includes teachers and students from each year of the programme;*
- 2. The introduction of a mandatory training programme in pedagogy and assessment for all new teachers;*
- 3. An intensification of the interaction between ViA and industry personnel. It is hoped that one outcome of this interaction will be the development of many projects based in industry which are suitable subjects for Master's theses;*
- 4. Provide students with an academic writing module as some students, especially international students have had no experience of writing a thesis (this issued was mentioned by students);*

*The panel appreciates that all changes for this joint programme must be agreed with KU.*

23. Other information, comments by the committee for the assessment of a study direction or an individual expert.

**The panel provides following recommendations for the study direction:**

*1. A reduction of internal information platforms should be undertaken, it should be enough with 2-3 platforms for student personal information and learning materials.*

*2. An intensification of the interaction between ViA and industry personnel. It is hoped that one outcome of this interaction will be the development of many projects based in industry which are suitable subjects for student Bachelor and Master's theses.*

*3. There is strong informal cooperation with employers, and the panel recommends to establish a formal structure for this collaboration: Advisory Council for the study direction should be established. Membership of this council should be specified to include the key sectors of employment for graduates of the programmes (including Travel Agencies, Tour Companies, Municipalities, etc.) and a regular schedule of meetings, at least twice a year.*

***The panel recommends a 6 year accreditation for the study direction.***

**Signatures of experts:**

Frank McMahon

\_\_\_\_\_  
/signature/

Agita Doniņa

\_\_\_\_\_  
/signature/

Vita Stīge-Škuškovnika

\_\_\_\_\_  
/signature/

Rūdolfs Freibergs

\_\_\_\_\_  
/signature/

Santa Graikste

\_\_\_\_\_  
/signature/