

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies

Study field: Economics

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## Summary Assessment of the Study Field

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The Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LLU) study direction "Economics" has clearly defined attainable goals, which well-suit the LLU vision, mission, and long term goals.

The LLU has established a policy on quality and has developed a quality assurance system and maintains it. The quality assurance system contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programmes and study direction. The system ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction and the relevant study programmes.

The LLU Study direction "Economics" has clearly defined and attainable goals, which well-suit the LLU vision. Procedures for the development and review of study programmes of this study direction and the feedback mechanisms are defined and logical. The LLU collects and analyses the information on study programmes of the study direction on a regular basis and uses it to improve the study direction. Student support and student-centered learning are taken into account in the implementation of the study process in the LLU.

The LLU has a good resource base and students and teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process.

The LLU generally has very high research results, a good research base, and traditions. The academic personnel of the programmes is engaged in research at the national and international level, including Horizon2020 projects, national research programme projects, research commissioned by the ministries of the Republic of Latvia, cooperation projects with local governments, and businesses. Most of the teaching personnel involved in the teaching of the master's programme "Economics" participate in scientific research. The total number of research papers is about 100 per year, the number of research papers indexed in the databases "Web of Science" and "Scopus" has increased significantly.

LLU has established strong cooperation with stakeholders in the broadest sense. All the stakeholders are involved in the management of the study direction: students, alumni, personnel, other educational institutions (secondary, secondary professional, and higher) both in Latvia and in the Baltic States, research institutes, and other organizations related to research, employers, industry experts and organizations, and the State. The study programmes have been developed by involving students, employers, external experts, and other stakeholders, which are involved in the review and improvement of study programmes.

The information published on the website of the LLU about the relevant study programmes of the study direction complies with the information available in the official registers. It provides important information for the candidates and the students and is published in all languages in which the study programmes are implemented.

There are resources available on [lais.llu.lv](http://lais.llu.lv): study course register is available with free-access and after authorization, there is relevant information for students and the academic personnel.

Information on bachelors, masters, and Ph.D. level studies is accessible on the website <http://www.esaf.llu.lv/lv>. On this platform via link <https://www.llu.lv/en/how-to-apply> the general information in English is available about study opportunities in LLU, including information on the bachelor programme "Economics" <https://lais.llu.lv/> (two specialization options: Agrarian and Environmental Economics or Business Process Management).

Section "Science and Innovation" (in English) is well perceived, it provides information on LLU fields of research, international scientific conferences, proceedings and journals published, research laboratories, research institutions, scientific cooperation for entrepreneurs, the LLU Innovation and Technology Transfer Center, as well as success stories.

All study programmes were designed and developed in accordance with the vision set by the LLU Development Strategy: Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies is one of the leading

universities in the field of science and technology in the Baltic Sea region, specializing in the sustainable use of natural resources for the improvement of the quality of life of the society. The master's study programme "Economics"(45311) is an academic programme. The Admission Regulation allows not only graduates from a bachelor's programme in economics but also graduates from other science programmes and relevant industry professionals to enroll in the programme. It reinforces and facilitates the interdisciplinary format of the learning process, provides a link to practical real-life, guarantees an opportunity to acquire knowledge and build up an in-depth understanding of economic processes in companies of a certain industry, and the motivation of the mentioned applicants is usually relatively stronger. During the learning process, it allows any student to critically assess his/her own performance and that of other students, to enter into the real competition and cooperation conditions, to form new corporate relations, and to acquire research skills.

Study programme "Agrarian and Regional Economics" (51311) is a unique programme in the Baltic states. Ph.D. students are involved in the research and study process, including lecturing to bachelor and master level students.

The programme Agrarian and Regional Economics also provides an opportunity for foreign students to study it in English. To purposefully familiarise applicants with the specifics of the programme – Agrarian and Regional

Economics – there is a prerequisite imposed on the applicants already during the admission process that the topics of their Ph.D. thesis have to pertain to agrarian or regional economics. Any Ph.D. thesis topic focuses on agrarian or regional economics and is associated with clearly defined research priorities prescribed by the Research Programme 2015-2020 of the LLU.

The specialists prepared as a result of the bachelor study programme "Economics"(43311) could not be associated with or attributed to a particular industry, and it has to be assessed in the context of the national economy and global trends because in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 264 Regulations regarding the Classification of Occupations, Basic Tasks Corresponding to the Occupation and Basic Qualification Requirements. The curriculum and plan of the academic bachelor programme Economics have been designed in line with economic trends to prepare academically educated specialists for carrying out research and practical work who understand and are able to critically assess basic laws and regularities of economic growth and development, understand current developments in the economy, are aware of business organization and management, implement innovative management ideas, are able to carry out a comprehensive analysis of rural areas with regard to regional development and planning, as well as perform qualified work in the field of accounting and finance in companies, institutions, and organizations of all levels both in Latvia and in the international labor market.

From the study year 2017/2018 the study programme is carried out in English and in Latvian. Ph.D. students are involved in the research and study process, including lecturing Bachelor and Masters level students.

All programmes have good perspectives for further internationalization, however, the possibilities for staff and student international exchange in programme-related areas currently are quite limited and should be widened.

The most important strengths of the institution:

- The programme is delivered following the LLU Constitution and the key principles set in the LLU Regulation of Studies: the freedom of cognition and learning, the indivisibility of learning and research, the alignment of learning with the needs of society, and the humane traditions of the world.
- Excellent research traditions, international recognition, and quality.
- Doctoral students consider that the benefits of international cooperation are not only research but also new contacts and friendships, improved foreign language skills, familiarisation with the local life rhythm and traditions, and popularisation of the university and country.

- The LLU is well-equipped in the study process and has a good resource base.
- Higher level management has a strong vision about the future of the university.
- Professional and loyal academic personnel.
- Evident incentives for academic staff members for publications.
- Strong cooperation with stakeholders, industry companies, and experts in Latvia.
- Student overall satisfaction with teaching and learning processes.
- LLU is open to change, the university sees potential obstacles as opportunities for improvement and change, e.g. cooperation with other universities, changes in national legislation.
- Study courses are regularly supplemented and updated, including current new courses and topics.

#### Weaknesses:

- Literature and sources need to be updated for the study course descriptions.
- The LLU should focus more on developing subjects related to trending topics in economics.
- Low number of international lecturers in all study programmes

## 1. Management of the Study Field

### Analysis

1.1. The common goal of the field of study Economics and programmes contained therein is to ensure the succession of all the higher education levels (bachelor, master, doctoral) in economics and develop adequate skills in students to research and predict changes in the domestic and global environments. The goal of the field of study is consistent with the vision of LLU – to become one of the leading universities in the field of science and technology in the Baltic Sea region, specialising in the sustainable use of natural resources for the improvement of the quality of life of the society. In general, the field of study Economics and the programmes contained therein are prospectively analysed in the context of the overall social, economic and political situation in Latvia. The prospects for the field of study is determined by socio-economic trends, national policies in specific areas, labour market forecasts, as well as an assessment of the field of study and the programmes contained therein, which is concisely presented in a SWOT analysis.

1.2. Administrative personnel for the field of study is as follows: the dean, vice-deans, programme directors and LLU Faculty of Economics and Social Development (ESAF) institute directors. Support personnel are also involved – ESAF institute secretaries (3) control office workflow, keep student files, keep faculty documentation, inform students and manage and account for internal and external documentation. The field of study is implemented at the ESAF which is fully in accordance with the goal defined by its Statute. A programme director is responsible for implementing the programme in accordance with the Statute on Programme Directors (LLU Senate Decision No. 9-81 of 12 April 2017). Programme directors and responsible departments and/or institutes are involved in the work of the Methodology Commission, thereby establishing cooperation aimed at interconnecting the programmes and practically implementing the programmes. There is a Methodology Commission for development of study process, but the frequency of its work is unclear. The field of study is administered in accordance with the external regulatory framework and the LLU Quality Management System Assurance Plan, which form a single system for effective process management and supervision. All the stakeholders are involved in the management of the study direction: students, alumni, personnel, other educational institutions (secondary, secondary professional and higher).

1.3. Admission at LLU is held in accordance with the Constitution of LLU, the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Cabinet regulation No. 846 of 10 October 2006 Regulations regarding Requirements, Criteria and Procedure for Enrolment on Study Programmes, the vice-rector for

studies ordinance On the Procedure of Admission to LLU, the Senate decision Regulations regarding Enrolment on Bachelor Studies at LLU, the Senate decision Regulations regarding Enrolment on Master Studies at LLU and the vice-rector for studies ordinance On the Rights and Obligations of Applicants and LLU during Admission. The regulations regarding enrolment on any LLU programme are approved by the LLU Senate every year in October and available on the LLU website. Applicants could apply for admission by using e-services (on the portal [www.latvija.lv](http://www.latvija.lv)) and the unified admission system, where the applicants' applications are processed simultaneously for 12 higher education institutions of Latvia. The recognition of learning outcomes achieved through previous education or professional experience is based on the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Cabinet regulation No. 36 of 10 January 2012 Regulations regarding the Recognition of Learning Outcomes Achieved through Previous Education or Professional Experience, the vice-rector for studies ordinance On the Assessment and Recognition of Learning Outcomes Achieved through Previous Education or Professional Experience at LLU, the Statute on the Recognition of Learning Outcomes Achieved through Previous Education or Professional Experience approved by the LLU Senate

1.4. In 2014, LLU concluded an agreement on the use of an inter-university unified computerized plagiarism control system (hereinafter – the System) and started examining all graduate theses on plagiarism in both bachelor and master programmes. In the 2017/2018 academic year, LLU decided that a compulsory examination of doctoral theses for plagiarism would be performed as well. In view of the plagiarism control results, Plagiarism Assessment Committees were established in accordance with an ordinance of the dean. They included the programme director, the supervisor, the director of the institute, a representative of the Faculty administration, and the head of the Methodology Commission. Students were also invited to the meetings of the Committee, and written explanations were received on the situation. In accordance with the LLU procedure, the student may re-write his/her graduate thesis not earlier than after one year.

1.5. The information published on the website of the higher education institution/ college regarding the relevant study programmes of the study direction complies with the information available in the official registers. Experts checked this information and found that information was correct.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

In general, the study direction and the relevant study programmes comply with the main directions of the strategic development of LLU. The structure of the management (administration) of the study direction and the relevant study programmes is oriented towards the development of the study direction. Admission at LLU is held in accordance with all necessary regulations. LLU uses appropriate plagiarism detection tools. The Methodological Commission is created, but experts did not have the opportunity to hear more and receive specific information on results achieved via this format by the involved parties. The information on the schedule (calendar) of this Commission was missing and the interviewed persons during the site visit could not provide precise information regarding this. LLU information published on the website complies with information available in official registers.

Strengths:

- The LLU has developed procedures and regulations to guarantee the qualifications and work quality of academic personnel
- Highly interested and involved higher-level management team (rector and two vice-rectors) which participates in the evaluation process.
- Programme directors have high autonomy in decision making and power to be responsible for the whole program.
- The LLU has a well-organized cooperation system between different departments.
- The LLU has a well-established and viable administrative and technical support system.

Weaknesses:

- Unclear frequency of the work of the Methodological Commission

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

### **Analysis**

2.1. The university has established a policy on quality in 2016 (available publicly: [https://www.llu.lv/sites/default/files/2016-10/KV\\_cepure\\_4\\_1.pdf](https://www.llu.lv/sites/default/files/2016-10/KV_cepure_4_1.pdf)). The experts did not obtain affirmation that it is reviewed and is flexible, furthermore, it has not been confirmed that there is an internal quality control system worked into processes. Formal requirements have been met. The quality management system has been introduced at both levels: university level and study programme level. A positive tendency has been noted: study direction reports are produced every year, they are reviewed by the Board of Studies and approved by the Senate. The web page of the faculty includes publicly accessible information on topical information on the study process.

2.2. The LLU has established a quality policy and has developed and maintains a quality assurance system. It contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programmes and study direction. The internal quality assurance system in the study direction and the programmes the LLU contained therein for all the levels of studies is developed in accordance with the European standards, quality assurance requirements, and key principles in higher education as prescribed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The internal quality assurance system is based on the key principles of European quality management and the standards set in Part 1 of the guidelines of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). The system ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction and the relevant study programmes.

2.3. The procedures for the development and review of the study programmes of the study direction and the feedback mechanisms (including feedback to students, employers, and graduates) have been

defined and they are logical, efficient and available for all stakeholders. The LLU collects and analyses

the information (statistics) on study programmes of the study direction on a regular basis and uses it to improve the study direction. The experts used interviews to formulate views on the improvements needed. The role of daily control has not been sufficiently assessed - for the improvement of the study process, exchange of experience, and raising of qualification, for example, lesson observation.

2.4. The LLU has identified the standards set forth in Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (described and demonstrated), the LLU developed Quality Management System is based on the key principles and requirements of the international Investors in Excellence standard. At all levels, the LLU complies with the ESG.

### **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The LLU has established a quality policy and has developed and maintains a quality assurance system. It contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programmes and study direction. The system ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction and the relevant study programmes.

The procedures for the development and review of the study programmes of the study direction and the feedback mechanisms (including feedback to students, employers, and graduates) have been defined and they are logical, efficient and available for all stakeholders. The LLU collects and analyses the information (statistics) on study programmes of the study direction on a regular basis and uses it to improve the study direction.

The LLU has identified the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG, which require special attention.

The LLU has determined aims and measures, which are integrated into a joint quality assurance system. All in all, the LLU complies with Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

**Strengths:**

- Compliance with the international Investors of Excellent standard.
- Self-confidence and loyalty of academic staff and administrative staff, interest, and motivation in continuous provision and improvement of study quality.
- Student overall satisfaction with teaching and learning processes;
- Process of continuous improvement is supported and implemented throughout all study divisions.
- The contribution of each academic personnel member to science is identified and revised once a year, and included as a part of the performance relates to that of ESAF Operational Plan
- Motivation system in the LLU is voluntary. It helps motivated to achieve better work conditions and it also helps to increase loyalty to the university.

**Weaknesses:**

- There is no evidence of a systematic approach to the internal control system, mentoring support, and control functions in daily tasks (adherence to lecture schedule, etc.).
- It is recommended to sustain digital information resources on all control actions and procedures. Educational and positive aspects of control functions have to be emphasized, for example, to expand the role of lecture observation by observing more lectures not just to attend pre-election lectures or guest lecturer classes. Therefore a mutual exchange of experience would be promoted via broadening horizons by attending classes of colleagues.
- Quality standards set for Research only partially include quality criteria for the Research output (the set KPIs are more related to quantity).

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

#### **Analysis**

3.1. Each year, the LLU Senate approves the distribution of LLU consolidated budget revenues and expenditures and the LLU budget, which is drawn up in accordance with the (annual) Law on the State Budget passed by the Saeima. Budgetary control and audit is carried out by an independent group of auditors whose report is also approved by the LLU Senate. Research funding consists of funding for projects that is allocated for the implementation of specific scientific and research projects, emuneration for researchers and leading researchers within the projects, and the costs of performing specific project tasks. In accordance with LLU Council of Science decision No.17-6 of 28 November 2017 On the assessment of the Scientific Performance of LLU Academic Personnel, Leading Researchers and Researchers, basic funding for research is allocated to: 1) remuneration for the contribution of each leading researcher and researcher, which is measured in points, and their research performance, in points; 2) co-funding for research projects implemented; 3) development of research infrastructure; 4) co-funding for research activities; 5) financial support for leading researchers and researchers – conference attendance, conference fees, participation in scientific symposia, etc.

3.2. The learning process in the field of study occurs mostly in the building of the Faculty of Economics and Social Development. There are 19 classrooms with a total floor area of 4123 m<sup>2</sup>, and at the LLU main building at 2 Liela Street, where five auditoriums are available, as one of the organisational units of ESAF – the Institute of Social and Human Sciences – is located there. There are 21 classrooms equipped with desktop computers and projectors or TV sets, and two classrooms with projectors. Three computer classrooms with 64 places are at the disposal of students. Computer software is available for learning project management and accounting. Students and teaching

personnel have at their disposal the Technology and Knowledge Transfer Division (TEPEK), which aims to promote the protection of intellectual property of scientists and companies and the commercialization of research results at LLU. Hostels are available to students and academic personnel. The LLU Sports Centre is available to students and academic personnel, a modern and large library. Experts found that a lot of scientific literature old publishing year. Access to the wireless (Wi-Fi) Internet is provided to students, academic personnel and guests in all the LLU Faculties.

3.3. At LLU, the attraction and employment of teaching personnel (incl. job vacancy announcement, recruitment, election etc.) is governed by the Statute of LLU. Open academic positions are filled on an open competitive basis. Academic personnel is hired on a full-time or part-time basis, depending on the individual academic workload, which is planned for each academic year in accordance with the LLU Statute on Academic Workloads and the rector's ordinance On the Planning, Accounting for and Control of Individual Workloads of Academic Personnel, which defines the components of workload of academic personnel, workload rates and the procedures of accounting for and control of the workload. Salaries for academic personnel are determined in accordance with the Cabinet regulation. Every six years, academic personnel are entitled to six-month paid academic leave for research or for research activities outside their workplace. Since 2017, LLU has introduced a motivation system for teaching personnel (LLU rector ordinance No.43-8/10), thereby achieving the objective set by the LLU Development Strategy 2015-2020 – to update the motivation system for teaching personnel. The teaching staff members take part both in outgoing and incoming mobility, which brings added value to the implementation of the study process and the study quality. But on experts opinion should be increased number of visiting lectures and outgoing students mobility.

3.4. Financial support in the form of scholarships is available to students during their studies. In addition, the LLU Development Fund offers students a total of 18 scholarship programmes ranging from EUR 40 to 1500. The scholarships are both monthly and one-time. Tuition fee relief for students. LLU provides support to students from abroad in relation to the following issues. The LLU Lifelong Education Centre has active volunteer students who unite to develop their organisational and managerial skills, teamwork skills, critical and creative thinking, change management skills and teamwork skills. The LLU Information Technology and Scientific Equipment Centre provides all students with IT and technical support by providing the following IT support services.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The LLU has developed a system to determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study direction and the relevant study programmes, also research activities. In general there's a good infrastructure for lectures, technical equipment and IT support. Has a library reading room with 2 computers equipped with licensed SPSS program. In general lecturers use appropriate teaching methods (lecture, case study, group work, discussion). Academic staff is hired by all needed requirements. There are for students as well for academic staff possibility to participate in Erasmus mobility. There are created system for financial support of students. During the visit experts obtained the information from local and international students on the fact that the academic personnel is translating literature from Russian by themselves (as per student's recollection, no more than two pages at a time). Therefore, it is not a problem for students that are not proficient in Russian. On the other hand, for students that are lacking English language skills, it provides the access to foreign academic literature. Many of the literature sources mentioned in study course descriptions were from the years 2000-2002; rarely the study course descriptions implied the use of literature newer than 2014.

Strengths:

- Well-equipped library (mostly e-library) which includes different databases: EBSCO, Science Direct, SCOPUS databases, etc.



- The LLU provides scientific literature in different languages
- Lecturers use Moodle system to attract students to studies and spread teaching materials
- The LLU has developed a motivational system for lecturers to incentivize being a part of the university community.

Weaknesses:

- Lack of scientific literature with the last 5 years, especially in English and Latvian languages.
- Not enough students participation in research work.
- Not enough foreign lecturers participation in the study process, especially due to growing amount of foreign students.

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

### **Analysis**

4.1. The research priorities for the study direction are the economics of sustainable development of bioresource industries; exploration of the potential for sustainable development of territories; the efficiency of production processes and competitiveness of enterprises. The priorities were selected based on scientific competence and expertise in the study direction and meet the needs of the prospective economic industries as defined in the Smart Specialization Strategy of Latvia. Research activity is focused on fundamental and applied research. Strategic and long-term research goals for the study direction are defined in the LLU Research Program, which stipulates the need to ensure excellence in research, enhancing technology and innovation, and promoting research-based learning process. The LLU Research Program defines specific, measurable targets to be achieved, such as the number of research papers published in SCOPUS and WoS-indexed publications, the number of research papers published in journals, participation in Horizon 2020 projects, the number of research papers co-authored by representatives of private sector been developed at LLU level. Progress in science and research activities and the achievement of the targets are assessed according to nine (9) objectives of the action plans described in the self-assessment report, such as attracting new scientists; developing and renewing research personnel; informing about international networks for researcher training; finding cooperation partners; establishing and developing cooperation between enterprises and researcher groups; among others. Furthermore, an internal grant competition “Conducting Fundamental Research at LLU” has been developed. The total funding of one research project is up to EUR 10 000 and the implementation period is up to two years. The study direction Economics contains the doctoral programme Agrarian and Regional Economics, which plays an important role in training new scientists, as 26% of all the LLU doctoral students study in this doctoral programme. The doctoral programme of Agrarian and Regional Economics is unique and different from the doctoral programmes at other universities. Each year, doctoral students produce, on average, 15 research papers indexed in the SCOPUS or Web of Science databases. In addition, doctoral students participate in research projects with their scientific supervisors. LLU has specified strategic and long-term research goals for the field of study, to ensure excellence in research, enhancing technology and innovation, and promoting research-based learning process. The LLU Research Program defines specific, measurable targets to be achieved, such as the number of research papers published in SCOPUS and WoS-indexed publications, among others. However, the SCOPUS and WoS targets are not strong enough measures for promoting excellence in research. Higher targets should be placed such as motivation for publishing in highly ranked SCOPUS and ABS journals (i.e., those with high impact factor) as well as publishing in top field journals in Economics, Agricultural Economics, Industrial Organization, Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Management, Marketing etc. There is a need to increase international cooperation

and attract new scientists from abroad and support the preparation of international project proposals through research funding. Furthermore, there are limited financial resources for supporting new scientists, doctoral and master students. No evidence of research cooperation between academic staff of the field of study.

4.2. Based on the self-assessment report, LLU has a system in place that accurately prescribes the use of basic funding, redistributing a certain amount of it to the organizational units (depending on their performance); each researcher receives remuneration for individual research performance, the amount of which depends directly on his/her research performance, but experts suggest to pay more attention to financial support of researchers. Furthermore, to increase the research capacity of LLU and to encourage the involvement of new scientists, an internal grant programme Implementation of the LLU Research Program has been established, thereby funding projects on a competitive basis. In the period 2013-2018, the academic personnel engaged in delivering the programmes contained in the field of study implemented approximately 50 research projects. Among them are international projects implemented within the European Union's 7th Framework Program projects; Cross - border cooperation programmes; and several national-level projects. It is worth to mention the research investigations commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture which focus on particular government policies and justify the research competence of the teaching personnel engaged in the field of study. Moreover, to contribute to the development of new projects, a project Promotion of International Cooperation Projects in Research and Innovation at LLU and the Supervised Research Institutions is being implemented from 2018 to 2022, which provides funding for preparing and submitting project proposals.

4.3. According to the self-evaluation report the international cooperation in the field of scientific research within the study direction and the relevant study programmes is conducted through cooperation with universities and research institutions around the world, including the Baltic Sea region. The main scientific research actions include participation in COST actions; Horizon 2020 projects; European Commission Erasmus + (KA2) programme projects; Meta Cluster for Attracting the Japanese Tourism Market (CAITO); Ready for Business (ReforB); ERA-NET network (RETHINK, SUMFOREST); among others. Furthermore, the academic personnel engaged in the field of study actively participate in and are members of various international organizations (see self-evaluation report). Based on the self-evaluation report there are some future plans for international cooperation among which the use of LLU internal grants to support new scientists and attract new scientists from abroad and to encourage the preparation of international project proposals by establishing a more targeted motivation system and using research performance funding.

4.4. According to the self-assessment report most of the teaching personnel engaged in the field of study perform both teaching and research; therefore, the latest and most important research findings are incorporated in the learning process, which is in line with one of the key principles of the Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020, i.e. knowledge-based education for the society. In the reporting period, more than 10 various teaching aids and scientific monographs, containing the results of scientific projects, have been prepared by the teaching personnel engaged in the field of study and used in delivering courses. Detailed examples can be found in the self-assessment report. Furthermore, teaching personnel are motivated by LLU to prepare teaching materials based on experience gained in research projects. Thus, teaching personnel are remunerated for the teaching materials they develop.

4.5. Based on the self-evaluation report, due to limited financial resources, the students' involvement in research is mainly on a voluntary basis (in the period 2013-2018, voluntary work contracts have been concluded with 13 students). A few students worked as assistants to leading researchers (4 contracts). Over the last 6 years, 9 master theses were produced within a research project (ECOSOC-LV). Since 2017, certain programmes (such as the LLU internal grant programmes Implementation of the LLU Research Program and Strengthening Scientific Research Capacity at the LLU) aim to promote the involvement of master students, doctoral students and new scientists in

scientific research, and eight doctoral students and their supervisors have been involved in these programmes. To stimulate students' interest in science, various student scientific conferences are held every year.

4.6. The teaching personnel and some organizational units of the LLU engaged in the field of study implement several activities that promote the introduction of various forms of innovation in the learning process. Several examples are mentioned in the self-assessment report such as technological and cooperation innovations are implemented at the LLU Technology and Knowledge Transfer Division (TEPEK); Social, strategic, cooperative and value-focused innovations are implemented in summer schools organized by the teaching personnel engaged in the field of study. Management, planning, marketing and organizational innovations are implemented at an annual event supervised by the teaching personnel engaged in the field of study, yet the event is organized by students themselves. Product, service and business model innovations are promoted through student involvement in business idea competitions held by municipalities, business organizations, associations and national institutions. Strong point: there is a collection of scientific publications accessible on the LLU's homepage. It is recommended to include publications by the LLU academic personnel in recommended literature for study courses. An appropriate virtual solution to access such sources has to be established.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The research priorities were selected based on scientific competence and expertise in the field of study and meet the needs of the prospective economic industries as defined in the Smart Specialization Strategy of Latvia. Research activity is focused on fundamental and applied research. The LLU has a system in place that accurately prescribes the use of basic funding, redistributing a certain amount of it to the organizational units (depending on their performance); each researcher receives remuneration for individual research performance, the amount of which depends directly on his/her research performance, but experts suggest to pay more attention to the financial support of researchers. The LLU has created a lot of international cooperation in the field. Due to limited financial resources, the students' involvement in research is mainly on a voluntary basis.

Strengths:

- The research priorities of the field of study are in the right direction.
- Provide incentives to academic staff members for research and publications.
- Incentives for research-based teaching.
- Evidence for international cooperation.
- The doctoral programme of Agrarian and Regional Economics is unique and different from the doctoral programmes at other universities, and among a few in Europe.

Weaknesses:

- Insufficient targets for promoting excellence in research such as highly ranked SCOPUS and ABS journals (i.e., those with high impact factor) as well as publishing in top field journals in Economics, Agricultural Economics, Industrial Organization, Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Management, Marketing etc.
- Insufficient financial resources for supporting new scientists (e.g., post-doctoral), doctoral, and scientists from abroad.
- Little evidence of an innovative approach to the study process.

## **5. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

### **Analysis**

5.1. The LLU has established strong cooperation with different stakeholders in Latvia and with

different educational establishments abroad. Some cooperation agreements date back to 2011, however The LLU stressed the ongoing cooperation on different levels within the faculty (7th Appendix: Cooperation Agreements), including the municipalities in some distant and rural areas. The main cooperation partners are employers, municipalities, educational establishments and NGOs. The accreditation experts were provided with information that The LLU cooperation agreements and implemented projects facilitate internship places for students, involve employers and professionals within different stages of the study process, including elaboration of new study courses, evaluation of students' works. There was evidence provided on the implementation of joint research projects which are relevant for different industries, in some cases resulting also with employment agreements with the students considering their specific and competitive knowledge. The LLU teaching staff actively cooperates with the employers and NGOs in order to provide information and expertise exchange and further identify research opportunities. Overall, the cooperation partners are selected according to the specifics of study programme. The educational institutions and universities with whom to cooperate, are selected according to the study directions provided and it largely depends on the willingness to cooperate from the other party. The contacts are established from mutual events and meetings, as well as mutually carrying out research projects, as well as ensuring the student and teaching staff exchange.

5.2. The LLU management provides to large extent the autonomy to programme directors and empowers them to find the most efficient approach to the study process. It partially relates also to international cooperation and definitely to the cooperation on national and local level, as teaching staff can come up with a proposal to launch cooperation. The international cooperation is mostly based on ERASMUS+ projects and it is mainly devoted to student and academic staff exchange, including the attraction of guest lecturers (Annex 5.1 - only few guest lecturers and not on the trending courses on the economics). The LLU is also having the experience of attracting the students outside the EU and the EEZ. During the onsite visit, the management and other responsible representatives acknowledged that more active attraction of students from the Scandinavian countries or Western Europe would not be efficient and necessary, considering that study direction and programme Economics has long and well-grounded traditions in those countries. It is resulting in approach that ERASMUS+ students are actively involved in and benefitting from the project's possibilities, yet foreign students outside this project are getting the most support from teaching staff and the International Cooperation Centre. During the onsite visit the LLU management as well as the International Cooperation Centre representative informed that in forthcoming years the attraction of international students will be a strategic priority, especially from Africa. The LLU positions itself as at the beginning of the internationalisation process and more active involvement of foreign students in the study process is foreseen and clear necessity for inclusive faculty was indicated. Currently the best practice on the involvement of foreign students in the study process is observed in other countries, some best practice examples were shared from Denmark and Finland. The LLU has established a broad cooperation network, the procedures are in place to attract the teaching staff and students from abroad related to the study direction and that would contribute to the improvement of the study process. Language barrier to facilitate the international environment was mentioned as well as the reserved and generally introvert culture of the local students. Foreign students participate in different public events that are not directly linked with the study process, but no direct involvement in the self-government, yet the LLU vision is to involve them by fostering the unification of student flows. Experts received the information from the LLU bachelor students that they would prefer mutual study process and it would automatically facilitate greater cooperation and involvement of the foreign students. One foreign student informed the experts that the focus on the study process and support from the teaching staff is sufficient and the student felt involved, however more active the student was within the EURES+ project framework. Bachelor students also emphasised the need for more foreign guest lecturers as an essential element for more open and international environment in the LLU. The existing experience and results are good. During the

meeting with academic personnel it has been established that they are highly motivated and open for international cooperation and do receive support from the university.

5.3. To analyse the situation in the labour market and to get in-depth knowledge regarding regional labour market issues, the LLU organises Graduates' Week once the graduates share their experience from the labour market. Also, on-site study visits to employers' represented companies are organised - in some case with the internship outcome or even job proposal for the student. Employers are invited to the LLU also as guest speakers to inform about current topicalities or provide information on some emerging tendencies in the specific sectors. The lecturers and the LLU students frequently participate at the local and international level conferences, workshops, as well as actively participate in the field of research.

5.4. Joint study programmes have not yet been established at the LLU, yet the teaching staff from the faculty of Information Technologies who benefited from the exchange to a university in Italy, has updated his courses and more actively is offering cross-faculty cooperation, also stressing more the importance of digitalisation and its impact on the economy at large, offering also study course possibilities for ESAF students. This cross-faculty cooperation was mainly emphasised by the teaching staff and should be encouraged also in the future.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

Overall the LLU has established strong cooperation network with all stakeholders and has developed a system for involvement of partners in the implementation of the study directions. The procedures have been established for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad within the study direction which are efficient and contribute to the improvement of the study process. The unified system is in place for the organization and ensurance of the internships in the LLU that motivate both the employers and interns to take active part and focus on their field of study.

Strengths:

- The LLU has a competitive advantage in the local market by providing a study programme "Agrarian Economy", which also includes study subjects that relate to the green economy. It provides specific knowledge to the students in this study direction.
- The LLU has strong and long-term cooperation with the companies, local governments, and the NGOs from Latvia.
- The LLU ensures internships for bachelor's and master's programme students.
- The LLU has an international study environment that allows it to attract new students.
- The LLU teaching staff and the students are ready to cooperate with international students in order to expand the internationalization and bring new perspectives to the study process.

Weaknesses:

- Insufficient implementation of the best practices learned from other countries regarding the facilitation of an inclusive study environment.

## **6. Implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures**

### **Analysis**

The previous accreditation of the study process took place in 2012, the international assessment of the study directions and study programmes, as indicated at the Application study direction

"Economics" for assessment (page 86), was carried out on 7 March 2012. Since then the portfolio of study programmes in the study direction has been broadened, putting a high emphasis on introducing courses in research organisation to train the students for effective data basis handling and for final thesis research. Research study courses have been introduced in all three levels - doctoral, master, and bachelor studies. Several new research courses have been implemented for all the study levels. Thus, the recommendation from previous accreditation has been implemented, however, the deadline for its implementation is "continuously", indicating the necessity to further explore the possibilities to improve the curriculum of the study direction.

LLU has also implemented the recommendation on the determination of the most competitive study programmes, also strengthening study infrastructure for these programmes. On 11 April 2012, the Board of the Faculty of Economics recognized the following programmes as competitive: the doctoral programme "Agriculture and Regional Economics", the academic master programme "Economics", the academic bachelor programme "Economics", yet on 11 June 2014 closing the professional master programme "Financial Management". The recommendation to keep clear identification of study programmes and merge of resources for the most perspective programmes also has been ensured.

There have been close collaboration with the employers ensured, not only establishing the Committee for graduates and employers on regular basis but also Club of Economists is operating since 2013.

As stated in the self-evaluation report, the previous assessment of the field of study was carried out on 7 March 2012. Four study programmes were submitted to the Committee for assessment: the academic bachelor programme ECONOMICS, code 43310, the academic master programme ECONOMICS, code 45310, the professional master programme FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, code 47343 and the doctoral programme AGRICULTURAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMICS, code 51310.

Following the previous experts' recommendations to identify the most competitive study programmes and strengthen the study infrastructure for these programmes, LLU closed the study programme Financial Management and created three specialization directions for master study programme Economics: Business and Logistics; Financial management and accounting; Sustainable territorial development and marketing.

The LLU has implemented all the recommendations of the previous accreditation process, however, some of them are of long-term improvement character, especially the ones regarding the research process and improvement of the quality of the final thesis, supplementation or updating of the bibliography stock, improving the IT tools for the research process. During the onsite visit, the LLU also expressed the necessity to continue regular evaluation of the study programmes to introduce trending courses on the economy

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The previous accreditation recommendations were implemented, some soon after the accreditation. Some of them are long-term and have a continuous process of improvement. The expert commission of 2012 emphasized the need to strengthen students' research skills and set higher and clearer requirements for bachelor's and master's thesis. It was also recommended to identify the most competitive study programmes and strengthen the study infrastructure for these programmes. Following this recommendation, the LLU closed the study programme Financial Management and created three specialization directions for master study programme Economics. During an onsite visit, the expert group got evidence about the implementation of the recommendations.

## **7. Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field**

- 1 Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems: \*

The quality management system of the LLU is part of the overall the LLU Development Strategy and covers a broad spectrum of matters. A general description of the LLU Quality Management System and the Quality Assurance Plan approved 10/10/2016. The quality management system of the LLU is externally audited every two years and a certificate was granted to the LLU both in 2016 (first audit) and in 2018 (repeated audit).

This was confirmed by the information gathered during meetings with the highest leadership of the university, students, and directors of study programs which were executed in a 'questions and answers' format.

The quality management system of the LLU is part of the overall LLU Development Strategy and covers a broad spectrum of matters. A general description of the LLU Quality Management System and the Quality Assurance Plan are available at

[https://www.llu.lv/sites/default/files/2016-10/KV\\_cepure\\_4\\_1.pdf](https://www.llu.lv/sites/default/files/2016-10/KV_cepure_4_1.pdf). (See page 12 in the self-assessment report)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** New study programmes are developed in accordance with the regulation approved by the LLU Senate – the Regulation regarding Drawing up, Approving and Changing Study Programmes (No. 10-5 of 13 March 2019)

The quality management system of the LLU covers all the spheres of the LLU activity. The academic personnel and other employees of the LLU are involved in the quality management system. The coordinating body of the quality management system is the Administrative Centre of the LLU, which is subordinate to the rector. The quality management system of the LLU covers all the spheres of the LLU activity. The academic personnel and other employees of LLU are involved in the quality management system. The coordinating body of the quality management system is the Administrative Centre of the LLU, which is subordinate to the rector. (See page 12 in the self-assessment report)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** New study programmes are developed in accordance with the regulation approved by the LLU Senate – the Regulation regarding Drawing up, Approving and Changing Study Programmes (No. 10-5 of 13 March 2019)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The student learning outcome assessment system is described in:

- the Statute of Studies (bachelor and master studies).
- the Statute of Doctoral Studies.

The requirements for assessing student learning outcomes for each particular course are given in course curricula

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** LLU has developed procedures and regulations (approved by the LLU Senate) to guarantee the qualifications and work quality of academic personnel:

1. The LLU Regulation regarding Elected Academic Positions.
2. The Regulation regarding the Calculation of Academic Workload.
3. The Motivation System for the LLU Academic Personnel.
4. Classes for students are scheduled in accordance with the procedures approved by the Rector.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The experts had an opportunity to make sure that the culture of continuous improvement was evident in the LLU during the visit. The study regulations have been developed.

The LLU uses an information system that aggregates information about the entire study process (decisions on the student, marks earned, payments made). Every semester, students are surveyed (electronic questionnaire) on courses taken, satisfaction with the way courses are organized, the content of courses, and the delivery of teaching personnel of study courses. The survey results are available to all teaching personnel and administrative staff.

For financial planning and accounting, the LLU uses the accounting system Horizon that is interconnected with the Ministry of Agriculture.

- 7 1.6. The higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their quality assurance systems.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The LLU quality management system includes a regular quality audit procedure. The Investor of Excellence standard provides a systemic approach to handling quality assurance and continuous improvement. Study direction reports are produced every year, which are reviewed by the Board of Studies and approved by the Senate. Once approved, the reports are made public on the LLU website.

This was confirmed by the information gathered during meetings with the highest leadership of the university, students, and directors of study programmes which were executed in a 'questions and answers' format.

- 8 R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Cooperation agreements with private enterprises, government organizations, NGOs, HEIs, and scientific institutions serve as evidence of cooperation, including cooperation in the provision of internship places, and organization of internships provided in the plans of study programmes.

Particularly welcome opportunities offered by international networks for researcher training: cooperation agreements have been concluded (e.g. in the academic year 2017/2018, the LLU has concluded 48 bilateral cooperation agreements with universities and research institutions of 22 countries, and the LLU is a member of 39 international academic institution associations or networks. Should be emphasized agreement with AERES University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands) for Consecutive Bachelor's degree. Increase research output as well as outgoing and ingoing mobility of students and researchers.

- 9 R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant



**Justification:** A very well thought out and wide network, including Agreement on cooperation between higher education institutions in the field of studies and scientific research in case of termination of the professional Master's study programme Smart Economics and Implementation of Innovation of the DU's study direction "Economics"; cooperation agreement in the field of research and innovation, improvement of education and further education programmes, the scientific expertise of projects and research, and development of the human and material-technical base etc. Higher targets should be placed for promoting excellence in research such highly ranked SCOPUS and ABS journals (i.e., those with high impact factor) as well as publishing in top field journals in Economics, Agricultural Economics, Industrial Organization, Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Management, Marketing etc

- 10 R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The Expert's conclusions were simply based on the documentation provided, interviews, and evolution during the visit.

## 8. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

Establish a more formal mechanism for collaboration between faculty members.

Further research would be advised to carry out regarding the possibilities to attract students also from the EU countries, not just Africa as it could add additional value to the quality of the study process and promote the name of the LLU and its work internationally.

Experts advise reconsidering cooperation agreements that would correspond to the needs of the LLU. Cooperation agreements should be renewed to correspond to modern days and the reality of mobility. It is highly recommended to utilize mobility opportunities by combining benefits: lectures, conferences, project meetings, exchange of experience. It is advised to use distanced guest lectures.

The LLU should evaluate the possibility to position itself internationally as an open and qualitative higher education institution who is very active in research and close cooperation with employers and policy makers

Increase financial support for master and Ph.D. students via their participation in research projects.

Increase the number of foreign lecturers in delivering lectures.

Update the information on LLU's website to provide more detailed and relevant information for the potential students from abroad, including the access to learning resources.

### Long-term recommendations

To expand cooperation with internationally recognized scholars and institutions relevant to the study direction. To increase quality standards set for research by setting higher quality criteria for research output. For example, publishing in SCOPUS or ABS-indexed journals with high impact factor; publishing in filed journals related to the study direction; aim at publishing in ABS-indexed journals with two or more stars.

Experts suggest that to increase the competitiveness of the LLU, a rebranding of its Latvian name should be considered. Currently, the name in English expresses the broader offer of academic education than the one in Latvian. It may withhold some potential local students who are not informed about the broad scope of study opportunities

We suggest focusing on more cooperation with projects that correspond to modern-day needs and the reality of current mobility. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it is advised to use remote guest lectures.

To organize courses for lecturers introducing new teaching methods to study process (reflection, role games, IT tools for different subjects, lectures in different places, blog writing, etc.)

To buy and implement more IT tools and programmes for the study process. For example, economic forecasting equipment, calculation of indicators programme, accounting software, import flow management, economic risk assessment programme, virtual enterprise simulation programme.

Organize seminars and exchange projects for the faculty to promote knowledge of intercultural communication.

High numbers of students dropping out of the programmes. Needs more communication, adaptation programmes for them, also implement a mentoring programme.

Forming mixed groups between foreign and Latvian students could promote integration and both Latvian and English learning.

To find new ways to invite more foreign lecturers to participate in the study process, especially given the growing number of foreign students.

To develop a cooperation strategy for the further development of the study field in case of cooperation with other regional universities.

The LLU should enlarge the scope of cooperation with employers (focus not only on successful companies but also on the ones that could benefit from the expertise of the LLU)

## **II. "Economics" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "Economics" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

The goal of the academic bachelor study programme Economics (code: 43311) is to enable students to acquire academic education in economics through creative teaching and research, to create preconditions for acquiring knowledge, and to develop high-quality intellectual, analytical, and professional skills in their chosen specialisation. The programme is offered both full-time (4 years) and part-time (4 years and 6 months). As the number of international students increased, the programme for full-time students is delivered also in English from study year 2017./2018. Since the previous accreditation, LLU has decided to not offer extramural studies for the programme due to low demand.

The academic bachelor programme Economics delivered by the LLU ESAF is relevant to the branch of economics and business. In accordance with Cabinet regulation No. 322 Regulation regarding the Classification of Education in Latvia, students of the programme acquire higher academic education

in the thematic category of social sciences, business, and law, a sub-category of social and human behavior, education programme category of economics – IKK43311. This legal document stipulates that academic education (bachelor's degree) may be acquired after completion of secondary general or professional education. The academic bachelor programme Economics provides knowledge, skills, and competence corresponding to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 6.

After the 2nd year of studies, students choose one of the specializations: Agricultural and Environmental Economics; Business Process Management; Accounting and Finance; Law; and Regional Development and Governance. As the number of international students increased, the programme for full-time students is now delivered also in English from study year 2017./2018.

The tasks of the study programme are:

- To provide students with theoretical knowledge and to develop research skills in economics by preparing the students for a higher level of studies and for scientific research, emphasising regional and bioeconomic developments;
- To create preconditions for building up analytical skills, professional, and communication skills in the field of economics, which would allow graduates to successfully integrate into the national and international labor markets in public and private organizations.

Learning outcomes of the study programme Economics are formulated as knowledge (4 results), skills (9 overall results, and 2 results based on the chosen specialization), and competencies (2 results). The academic bachelor programme Economics provides knowledge, skills, and competence corresponding to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 6. Upon completing the programme, the student is awarded a Bachelor of Social Science in Economics.

During the on-site visit, the experts ascertained that graduates from the programme not only have knowledge of economics but also in various adjacent sciences, e.g. management science, mathematics, computer science, environmental science, agriculture, sociology, law, philosophy, business ethics, ecology, etc. thus promoting the ability to think, work and introduce innovations in an interdisciplinary way.

The academic study programme allows acquiring general knowledge in economics with an introduction to research and understanding of the field of agriculture. It offers five specializations. Upon completing the programme, the student is awarded a Bachelor of Social Science in Economics. There is general information provided to the students from abroad regarding the Bachelor studies "Economics" (see - <https://apply.llu.lv/courses/course/16-bachelor-economics>). It is very concise and does not indicate on the specific requirements for the enrolment. If attraction of the foreign students is one of the LLU priorities, the information on the website should be updated to provide more information to the potential students, by also explaining the availability of learning resources and access to the literature in the field. The information in general is not user friendly. Information about language requirements on the web page does not match the information submitted by LLU in the Self Evaluation Report. According to the self Evaluation Report, it is stated in Latvian legislation that starting from Autumn semester of 2020 the students need to attach to their application a document issued by an international testing institution within the last five years that certifies that the foreigner has at least B2 level of English language skills. The accepted proof of proficiency: minimum – CEFR level B2, IELTS score 5.5, TOEFL score 520, TOEFL-iBT score 68). However, the information on the web page states that in case the student cannot provide any certificate, an online interview will be organized.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The goal of academic bachelor study programme Economics (code: 43311) is to enable students to acquire academic education in economics through creative teaching and research, to create

preconditions for acquiring knowledge and to develop high quality intellectual, analytical and professional skills in their chosen specialisation. The academic bachelor programme Economics provides knowledge, skills and competence corresponding to European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 6. The academic study programme allows to acquire general knowledge in economics with an introduction to research and understanding of the field of agriculture. It offers five specialisations.

#### Strengths:

- The programme's aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated.
- The programme is offered to both local and international students.
- The programme offers 5 specializations.
- Students gain interdisciplinary knowledge in economics and adjacent areas.

#### Weaknesses

## 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

### Analysis

The programme „Economics“ was designed and developed in accordance with the vision set by the LLU Development Strategy and the strategy of the programme Economics could be defined: based on the integration of learning and research for the purposes of examining development opportunities for the bioresource economy and territorial sustainable development, further expanding the internationalization of learning and lifelong education and aligning the goals of the stakeholders engaged in the learning process with their interests, to prepare high-quality, competitive specialists in economics in line with the framework of the specialization. Five specializations are implemented within the programme: Agricultural and Environmental Economics; Business Process Management; Accounting and Finance; Law; and Regional Development and Governance. Three specializations are provided for part-time students (taking into account the number and wishes of students): Business Process Management; Accounting and Finance; and Regional Development and Governance. Two specializations are provided in English: Agricultural and Environmental Economics and Business Process Management. According to their research and professional interests, students choose one of the specializations after the 2nd year of studies. Due to local and global problems of natural resource use and bioeconomy research, the course Bioeconomics (5 CP) was included in the programme in 2014 and a new specialization –Agricultural and Environmental Economics – was established. It required introducing a range of new courses, e.g. Agricultural and Environmental Policy (2 CP), Economy of Renewable Energy (2CP), Environmental Law (2 CP), the study project Agricultural Economics (4 CP), and the practice Bioeconomics (8 CP) (see Annex 18). To make the curriculum of the specialization Business Process Management meet labor market needs, the following new courses were introduced in 2015: Quality Management (3 CP), Customer Relationship Management (2 CP), Innovation in Business (2 CP), Sales (Commerce) Management (2CP) and the study project Business Process Management (4 CP). In order for the curriculum of the programme to be in line with the latest trends in the economy, the following new courses were introduced: Organizing of Agricultural Processes (4 CP) and Institutional Environment for Entrepreneurship (2 CP). At the final stage of studies, the programme prescribes that the students have to undergo practical training for practical application of the theoretical knowledge acquired (8 CP). A bachelor thesis is a research study for acquiring a Bachelor of Social Sciences in Economics. The compliance of the curriculum of the programme with international requirements is also confirmed by the cooperation agreement concluded with AERES University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands) on obtaining a diploma at this university. In accordance with the LLU Senate decision

No. 8-182 LLU Regulation of Studies, students' knowledge is assessed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The learning process involves classroom classes, independent studies, consultations with teaching personnel and tests or examinations as well as practical training. In lectures and seminars Audience Interaction Tools are used, such as Sli.do, Kahoot.it, Catchbox.

To ensure the successful implementation of traineeships and support for students, the institute director appoints a person responsible for student practical training who coordinates the implementation of traineeships for the specialization the institute is responsible for and ensures the preparation of traineeship documents. A student's practical training is supervised and coordinated by an academic personnel member –the practice supervisor – who is approved by the director of the responsible institute. LLU students participating in the Erasmus + programme may take their traineeships at foreign companies or institutions located in one of the Erasmus + countries. The usefulness of incorporating work placement into the study plan is evidenced by the proportion of full-time students (37.5%) who also got a job during their work placements in the academic year 2018/2019.

In the reporting period, the topics of bachelor theses could be divided into the following groups: 1) assessment of economic processes in Latvia and the EU (37 theses or 8.2% of total); 2) sustainable development, agricultural and environmental economics (50 theses or 11.1%); 3) business process analysis and start-ups (93 theses or 20.7%); 4) accounting and analysis for companies and institutions (99 theses or 22.0%); 5) financial and tax analysis for companies and institutions (40 theses or 8.9%); 6) problems of regional development and analysis of EU-funded projects (71 theses or 15.8%); 7) legal aspects of economic activity (59 theses or 13.1%).

According to students' surveys, students gave very positive ratings to the classes delivered by employers and other guest lecturers, which built up their understanding of application of the acquired knowledge in their future jobs. The students acknowledged that they were well informed about the opportunities of ERASMUS + for studies and work placement. The students appreciated some aspects of availability of information on the curriculum of the course and the requirements for earning a mark, as well as an opportunity to solve some problems at the Dean's Office and in cooperation with the programme director. Overall, the results of alumni surveys were positive. The alumni appreciated the skills they built up to independently acquire, select, and analyze information, which was very important for the academic curriculum, yet they pointed to a lack of some practical skills. The alumni also appreciated the attitude of teaching personnel to them during the period of studies. They highly rated the availability of information for learning. A survey of 76 employers providing work placements was conducted to find out their opinions. The trainees underwent practical training at enterprises of various fields and sizes: small, medium and large, so the survey results were comprehensive. In assessing a trainee's skills, the employers gave the highest ratings to the trainee's ability to acquire new knowledge and skills (78%) and communication skills (76%).

The mobility of students of the programme under Erasmus + was implemented in four ways: 1) studies (102 students); 2) work placement at foreign companies (5 students); 3) participation in international experience-sharing conferences held by the Erasmus Social Network (ESN) (5 students); 4) ERASMUS IP project Sustainability and Innovation in Rural Development held in Lithuania (2 students).

The descriptions of the study courses, the traineeship, and the final thesis are of high quality and comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The content is relevant and complementary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets the needs of the relevant industry and the scientific trends. The study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods, contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centred learning and teaching principles are taken into account. The outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students, employers, and graduates are used to improve the quality of studies. The

students avail themselves of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities, and the learning outcomes achieved during such mobility are recognized.

### **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The programme „Economics“ was designed and developed in accordance with the vision set by the LLU Development Strategy and the strategy of the programme Economics could be defined: based on the integration of learning and research for the purposes of examining development opportunities for the bioresource economy and territorial sustainable development, further expanding the internationalization of learning and lifelong education and aligning the goals of the stakeholders engaged in the learning process with their interests, to prepare high-quality, competitive specialists in economics in line with the framework of the specialization. Five specializations are implemented within the programme, but experts suggests to add some more subjects.

#### **Strengths**

- Good study programme; Agricultural and Environmental Economics specialization is important for the country and the region.
- Two specializations are provided in English: Agricultural and Environmental Economics and Business Process Management.
- Study course descriptions are very detailed and information on knowledge, skills, competence is well described

#### **Weaknesses**

- Insufficient subjects in the programme pertaining to public relations and psychology and to extend the use of various technologies in some current courses.

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

#### **Analysis**

The learning process is organised mostly in the building of ESAF. Classrooms are equipped according to the specifics of the study process. The informative basis for the LLU is in accordance with the specifics of the study direction, allowing students and teaching staff to achieve the corresponding academic outcomes and they comply with the specific features and conditions for the implementation for the study process. For the scientific research of publications LLU provides EBSCO, Science Direct, Scopus databases. Library provides scientific journals and magazines, and periodic on the economics.

Overall, the study foundation, information base (including library), materials and technical base and financial foundation correspond to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions, creating preconditions for the achievements of study outcomes. LLU demonstrated the ability to ensure the delivery of high-quality study process.

The course Practical Agriculture Management is delivered on the LLU research and training farm Vecauce where students are familiarised with the latest technologies in agriculture and work organisation and management. Study trips are held to build up practical skills: e.g. to LLKC and its offices; Stalgene in Jelgava municipality (familiarisation with the results of EU-funded projects at the Stalgene Secondary School, the Stalgene Art Studio, Zekants Ltd); the Jelgava Territorial Office of the State Environmental Service; the Zemgale Regional Court; “Svētes maize” Ltd (bakery); the

separate waste collection site (Jelgava); the landfill “Brakšķi” (Jelgava municipality, Livberze rural territory); the Bank of Latvia, the administration of Zemgale planning region, the Jelgava City Council and other enterprises and farms.

### **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

In general, the study foundation, information base (including libraries), material and technical base and financial foundation corresponds to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation

conditions and create preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes, thus, demonstrating the ability to ensure the delivery of a high-quality study process. The learning process is organised mostly in the building of ESAF. Classrooms are equipped according to the specifics of the study process.

Strengths:

- Sufficient material and technical resource base.
- A modern library that fosters individual academic work of the students.
- Developed a system for internships and active participation at the student exchange programmes.
- In this study programme, not only ESAF teaching personnel but also that of the other faculties of LLU are engaged, ensuring mixed course delivery. Thus, students have the possibility to enhance their STEM skills.
- The interactive Moodle tool is available for the e-studies and its usage should be further increased, even considering the constant streaming of some courses online in the future.

Weaknesses:

- The necessity to maintain and supplement the sources of the library more often with the trending and up to date literature.
- Few IT tools used for the research process, such as software for data analysis.
- The LLU for its development needs to depend on the availability of the ESF funding.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

It is positive that academic personnel develops publications on a regular basis and the university encourages academic personnel to prepare publications. In the academic year 2018/2019, 86 teaching personnel of various levels involved in the programme, while in the academic year 2019/2020, 69. Of the total teaching personnel involved in the programme in the academic year 2019/2020, 46 or 67% were elected at LLU. However, 23 teaching personnel worked in various institutions and enterprises, which ensured connection with the work environment. Teaching personnel from 13 LLU organizational units are involved in the implementation of the programme. This cooperation is determined by the implementation of an interdisciplinary framework in the learning process. It ensures the uniqueness of the programme and the achievement of its goal, as well as the alignment of the programme with the LLU Development Strategy. Of the total teaching personnel, 16 or 23.2% represent the other Faculties of LLU. The teaching personnel of LLU are involved in the implementation of other programmes too; therefore, another indicator of their performance is the number of workloads. In the academic year 2018/2019, the programme had 26.20 FTE workloads for the teaching staff of various levels. In the programme, there are 10.3 students per FTE workload, which is significantly affected by the number of foreign students in their

group – three students, on average. Foreign students take only a few courses together with full-time students.

In the academic year 2019/2020, the programme was delivered by: professors – 9 (13.0%), associate professors – 11 (15.9%), assistant professors – 14 (20.2%) and lecturers – 35 (50.7%). The composition and qualifications of the teaching personnel involved in the programme ensure meeting the requirements set in Paragraph 3 of Section 55 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions – “not less than five professors and associate professors altogether, who are elected to academic positions in the relevant higher education institution, shall take part in the implementation of the compulsory part and the limited elective part of academic study programmes”. The qualifications of teaching personnel for study programmes are determined by a unified system in the country, as well as the relevant legal documents of LLU. For detailed information on qualification requirements for teaching personnel, qualification assessment and opportunities for professional development, see section 2.3.5. Of the total workload, 66.0% is carried out by the teaching personnel elected at the LLU. Teaching personnel are elected in accordance with the LLU Statute on Academic Positions. According to the requirements set by the LLU, professors, associate professors and assistant professors have doctoral degrees, while lecturers have a master’s degree or are experienced professionals.

The academic personnel involved in the delivery of the programme are involved in scientific research at international and national level, and their research directly relates to the goal and objectives of the programme. The results of research done by academic personnel are used in the learning process. For example, the results of the national research programme ECOSOC-LV have been summarized in two scientific monographs, while a monograph was produced within the national research programme Value and Dynamic of Latvia’s Ecosystems under Changing Climate (EVIDEnT), among others.

Cooperation among teaching personnel occurs throughout the learning process and takes the following forms: development of new courses and the enhancement of existing ones; involvement in the Methodology Commission, which entails assessing the syllabuses of courses and study plans, in accordance with the LLU Statute of the Methodology Commission; involvement in hospitation of classes in accordance with the Procedure of Hospitation of Classes at LLU; delivery of courses by several teaching personnel; assessment of the learning outcomes of students (study projects, practice, bachelor theses).

The ratio of students to teaching personnel in the academic year 2018/2019 was 10.3:1.

The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments, and it enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

It is recommended an increase of the faculty members (i.e. assistant, associate and full professors) in the teaching process of the programme.

The academic staff is involved in scientific research (in the fields related to the content of the study programme) both at national and international level. The obtained information is used in the study process. There is a mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members in place, which contributes to the improvement of the study courses and their correlation.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

In the reporting period, the composition of teaching personnel did not change significantly, as only



three teaching personnel changed during the reporting period. The stability and permanence of teaching personnel have a positive effect on the quality of studies, as the build-up knowledge, teaching experience, and skills of teaching personnel ensure continuous enhancement and updating of the content of courses in line with the current situation in industries and science. The academic personnel involved in the delivery of the programme are involved in scientific research at the international and national levels, and their research directly relates to the goal and objectives of the programme. There are information provided of academic personnel and experts assessed the planning of study courses, compared the CVs of academic personnel to the needs of study programs recognized that a low number of faculty members (i.e. assistant, associate, and full professors) are involved in the teaching process of the programme. The academic staff is involved in scientific research (in the fields related to the content of the study programme) both at the national and international levels.

Strengths:

- Good ratio of students to teaching personnel (i.e. 10.3:1)

Weaknesses:

- A low number of faculty members (i.e. assistant, associate, and full professors) are involved in the teaching process of the programme.
- Few bachelor level students are interested and involved in the research process.

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Economics"

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Bachelor\_Diploma\_Supplement\_Econ\_EN.rar issued for the acquisition of the study program complies with the procedure by which state-recognized documents of higher education are issued. \*

- 2 2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annexes: Agreement between LLU and RTU.docx and LLU confirmation\_Bachelor program.docx

If the program is discontinued and students do not wish to continue their studies at LLU or RTU, they are reimbursed for their tuition fees.

- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex LLU confirmation\_Bachelor program.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex LLU confirmation\_Bachelor program.docx

All the teaching personnel participating in the delivery of the program in Latvian have knowledge of the official language to perform their professional duties in compliance with the Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex\_6.rar and Europass\_EN.rar

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex LLU confirmation\_Bachelor program.docx

All the teaching personnel participating in the delivery of the program in Latvian have knowledge of the official language to perform their professional duties in compliance with the Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex Studiju\_ligums\_paraugs\_EN.pdf

- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex Descriptions of the study courses.rar

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex Council of Higher Education\_conclusion\_Bachelor program.docx

12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 14 The program and its curriculum were developed in compliance with the Education Law, the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Cabinet regulation No.240 Regulations regarding the Academic Education National Standard (13 May 2014), the LLU Regulation of Studies (15 June 2015)

(<https://www.llu.lv/en/study-guide-documents>). Upon completing the program, the student is awarded a Bachelor of Social Science in Economics

13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annexes: Descriptions of the study courses.rar , Annex\_6.rar and Europass\_EN.rar

15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Document review and interviews during the visit

## Requirements (R6-R8)

1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Chapter 2.3.2. and evident from the discussions during the accreditation visit.

2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 14

3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The descriptions of the study courses, the traineeship, and the final thesis are of high quality and comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The content is relevant and complementary, and it complies with the aims of the study program, ensures the achievement of

the learning outcomes, and meets the needs of the relevant industry and the scientific trends. The study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods, contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study program. Student-centered learning and teaching principles are taken into account. The outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students, employers, and graduates are used to improve the quality of studies. The students avail themselves of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities, and the learning outcomes achieved during such mobility are recognized. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study program complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study program and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments, and it enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study program and the relevant study courses. It is recommended an increase of the faculty members (i.e. assistant, associate, and full professors) in the teaching process of the program. The academic staff is involved in scientific research (in the fields related to the content of the study program) both at national and international level. The obtained information is used in the study process. There is a mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members in place, which contributes to the improvement of the study courses and their correlation.

#### Strengths

- Good study program; Agricultural and Environmental Economics specialization important for the country and the region.
- Two specializations are provided in English: Agricultural and Environmental Economics and Business Process Management.
- Good ratio of students to teaching personnel (i.e. 10.3:1)

#### Weaknesses

- Insufficient subjects of public relations and psychology and to extend the use of various technologies in some current courses.
- A low number of faculty members (i.e. assistant, associate, and full professors) involved in the teaching process of the program.

### Evaluation of the study programme "Economics"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### 6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Economics"

#### Short-term recommendations

Increase the number of foreign lecturers in delivering lectures.

The program should include courses pertaining to public relations and psychology and to extend the use of various technologies in some current courses.

Further actions should be taken to complement theoretical studies with practice.

Increase the number of faculty members (assistant, associate, and full professors) involved in the teaching process of the program.

Update the information on LLU's website to provide current information for the potential students from abroad on the proof of language requirements for Bachelor study program Economics.

#### Long-term recommendations

To expand cooperation with internationally recognized scholars and institutions relevant to the study program.

To create a motivation system for students that involve them to research work.

The necessity to maintain and supplement the sources of the library more often with the trending and up to date literature

## **II. "Economics" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "Economics" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

The Academic master study programme "Economics" (code: 45311) of the study programme, the degree, the professional qualification or the degree and the professional qualification to be acquired, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. In the period from the academic year 2013/2014 to the academic year 2018/2019, the programme was delivered in Latvian. The number of graduates varied from year to year, with an average of 33 students per year. The number of graduates varied by specialisation, with the most graduates representing financial specialisations – 94 over the last six years, which was almost half of all the graduates from the master programme Economics (47%); 40 graduates represented entrepreneurship, business, and logistics-related specialisations, while the specialisation pertaining to territorial development and marketing was represented by 45 graduates (23%).

The academic master programme Economics and the Master of Social Sciences in Economics to be awarded upon completing the program are fully linked with the learning outcomes of the programme. It is determined by the dominant proportion of courses in economics and business science in the programme, some of them – Macroeconomics, Microeconomics, Finances and Credit, Accounting and Bookkeeping theory, Regional Economics, Marketing, Econometrics, and Statistics – are offered for in-depth and extended learning, which is confirmed by the learning outcomes of the relevant courses. The National Academic Education Standard stipulates that if the workload of a master programme is 80 CP, the program's compulsory theoretical courses pertaining to economics and business have to be learned in-depth and theoretical findings concerning urgent problems in the mentioned fields have to be approbated, with both being worth at least 24 CP. The mentioned requirement for the programme equals 34 CP, which guarantees a successful build-up of conceptual knowledge and professional and soft skills and competencies. The program is offered in full-time (2 years) in Latvian. Since the academic year 2016/2017, the LLU has stopped offering part-time studies for the programme due to decreasing demand as full-time studies are organised two days a week.

The Admission Regulation allows not only graduates from a programme of economics but also graduates from other science programmes and relevant industry professionals to enroll on the programme. It reinforces and facilitates the interdisciplinary format of the learning process and provides a link to practical real life.

#### **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The professional qualification or the degree and the professional qualification to be acquired, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. The title of the study programme, the degree to be obtained, the professional qualification or the degree and the professional qualification, the aims, the tasks, the study results, and the admission requirements are

mutually compatible.

#### Strengths:

- study programme has 3 specializations.
- Students without a background in economics can enroll in the study programme, therefore, contributing to a diverse interdisciplinary study process;
- full-time studies are organized 2 days a week and are therefore convenient for students who have a full-time job;

#### Weaknesses

- There are no plans on providing distance learning options that the University considers to be disadvantageous

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

### **Analysis**

The curricula of courses are designed and developed in accordance with the LLU Development Strategy and the vision of the LLU (as well as with the EU and national strategic documents) which are related to the sustainable use of natural resources for the improvement of the quality of life of the society, economic growth, the environment, human wellbeing and sustainable development, with particular emphasis on the environmental dimension and focus on innovation, resource efficiency, digitalization etc. Based on the self-assessment report, in the period 2013-2019, changes in the curricula of courses and specializations of the master programme Economics were associated with the above-mentioned developments. In the academic year 2015-2016, a new compulsory course Environmental Economics (2 CP) was introduced that focuses on natural resource exploitation and stresses the roles of the bioeconomy and sustainable development. Three new specializations have been created instead of the five previous ones: Business and Logistics (Institute of Business and Management Science), Financial Management and Accounting (Institute of Finance and Accounting) and Sustainable Territorial Development and Marketing (Institute of Economics and Regional Development). The total number of courses has been reduced from 74 to 43. New courses have been designed, e.g. the courses focusing on the issues of sustainable development of nature, bioresources and territories: Sustainable Cooperation Management, Ecopreneurship, Sustainable Development of Territories, Tourism Economics, Sustainability of Packaging, and Investments in Territorial Development. Furthermore, courses of Geographic Information Systems and E-business Systems exist that focus on digitalization issues. In relation to the labor market, the specializations prepare specialists in the branches of business management, finance and credit, and regional economics and marketing. Furthermore, the curricula and syllabuses of courses are designed in accordance with the Regulations regarding the Academic Education National Standard. The research topics chosen for master theses are closely related to the research areas of the master programme Economics. In the period under consideration, master theses produced by 11 students. The research done in master theses is successfully presented at students' annual scientific conferences. The courses provided by the study programme are in line with the goals of the programme. Furthermore, the goals of each course, the learning outcomes and the topics provide students with academic knowledge, appropriate skills, and competences for analytical assessment of complex economic issues. The courses are also focus on the development of research skills for scientific and academic work. The programme is designed to provide theoretical knowledge, practical skills and competencies that are essential to the economic and business sectors, thereby preparing specialists being nationally and internationally competitive in this field. The courses contained in the programme are divided into two categories: compulsory courses and restricted elective courses. The compulsory courses focus on Statistical and Econometric Methods and Research Design and

Methods, while there are three categories of elective courses corresponding to the specializations of the programme. Overall, the specializations are in line with the goals of the programme. The aim of a master thesis is a part of the curriculum and successfully contributes to the student's scientific knowledge and research ability. By taking courses and successfully defending a master thesis, a student can obtain academic education in economics that provides nationally and internationally competitive knowledge, relevant skills, and competences. The topics of students' graduate theses closely relate to the specialization chosen, currently they are business, financial and territorial development issues.

In the delivery of the master programme the monological, dialogical and research study methods are applied in various proportions and intended to achieve the goal and objectives of the programme. Furthermore, an e-learning platform Moodle is used too. Course assessment criteria for students are included in the syllabuses of courses, defining the levels of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, competence) to be achieved, the methods used to assess each component of learning outcomes, as well as certain forms of knowledge assessment and requirements for taking a test or examination. Based on the self-assessment report, in accordance with the LLU Regulation of Studies, the student has the right to make a claim regarding the assessment of an examination/graduate thesis and the organization and conduct of the learning process. The student may submit an appeal against the assessment of the final examination of master studies to the chairperson of the relevant committee. The Regulation of Studies also specifies the procedure for processing the appeal.

To assess the master programme Economics, a survey of students and alumni is conducted annually. According to the survey of the students (on average 92% of students are involved) the proportion of the respondents who believed they were fully satisfied with the courses offered has increased significantly (9% in 2015 compared to 50% in 2019). The proportion of the respondents who fully agreed or rather agreed that new and innovative findings were learnt during the learning process has increased from 52% in 2015 to 90% in 2019. According to the survey of alumni, in 2019, 83% had jobs that matched or more likely matched their education, while that percentage was 45% in 2015. Overall, the alumni's satisfaction with their choice of the programme has increased (61% in 2019 compared to 45% in 2015). There are two negative trends observed in the survey of alumni. The number of the alumni who believed they had improved their communication skills and ability to communicate during their university studies has decreased (45% in 2015 compared to 33% in 2019). The number of the alumni intending to continue their studies at doctoral level has also decreased. This fact calls for more involvement of master students in research and scientific research projects, which is the basis for their future doctoral studies. Based on alumni recommendations, it would be necessary for the programme to include courses pertaining to public relations and psychology, as well as to extend the use of various technologies in some current courses. A survey of employers. One third of the employers surveyed confirmed that the alumni had jobs fully matching their education, while for two thirds it was a partially match. Assessing the alumni, 50% of the employers believed that the alumni possessed good theoretical knowledge and had practical preparedness, 20% required little training to be successful in doing the tasks assigned to them. The results of surveys of students, alumni and employers are used by the programme director for enhancing study plans and course curricula in cooperation with the teaching personnel and employers engaged in the delivery of the programme. Some courses are excluded from the study plan, and new courses are developed and introduced. Employers are invited as guest lecturers to deliver some topics. Each year, in cooperation with entrepreneurs of the region, a study tour is held to familiarize the students with the business environment and current developments in relation to the enterprises in rural areas. In this way, theoretical studies are complemented by practice.

The descriptions of the study courses and the final thesis are of high quality and comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. More effort should be taken to complement theoretical studies with practice, and thus better preparing master graduates for the labor market.

On the other hand, master students should be provided with the opportunity to get involved more intensely in research and scientific research projects and thus have the opportunity to continue for future doctoral studies. The study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods, contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centered learning and teaching principles are taken into account. The outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students, employers, and graduates are used to improve the quality of studies. The students avail themselves of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities, and the learning outcomes achieved during such mobility are recognized.

Several students of the master programme Economics studied in foreign universities from the academic year 2013/2014 to the academic year 2018/2019 (e.g. University of Huelva, Spain; Braganca Polytechnic Institute, Portugal; Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal; Aleksandras Stulginskis University in Kaunas, Lithuania; Estonian University of Life Sciences). When a student goes on mobility, a protocol of intent for academic recognition is drawn up, which guarantees that upon returning from the mobility, the credits of the courses taken will be transferred.

### **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The descriptions of the study courses and the final thesis are of high quality and comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The content is relevant and complimentary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets the needs of the relevant industry and the scientific trends. More precision in the description of Traineeships (Practices) can be recommended. Experts found that several study programmes indicate very old sources.

Programme "Economics" study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods, contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centered learning and teaching principles are taken into account. The students avail themselves of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities, and the learning outcomes achieved during such mobility are recognized.

The outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students and stakeholders are used to improve the quality of studies.

#### **Strengths**

- Unique study programme
- Descriptions of study courses are very detailed and information about its syllabus is well described. Topics, skills, and potential competencies are all listed.
- Students can participate in scientific conferences

#### **Weaknesses**

- Little involvement from master students in research and scientific research projects, which is the basis for their future doctoral studies.
- The theoretical knowledge acquired in the studies is not fully tested in practical classes
- In all descriptions of study courses, there is a need to update information on its sources.

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

#### **Analysis**

The study programme "Economics" has adequate resources (both human and technical resources) to ensure the implementation of a qualitative study process. The LLU has available financial resources from five different sources - state budget (constituting the major part of the LLU budget), the LLU tuition fee revenue, research revenue, ERASMUS revenue and donations. During the last two



academic years, there have been no changes in the curriculum of the academic master programme in Economics. However, the syllabuses of courses and the list of bibliographical sources are constantly being updated and supplemented. This programme was designed and developed in accordance with the vision set out by the LLU Development Strategy, including the allocated resources for the programme. The faculty cooperates closely with the Innovation and Technology Transfer Centre to combine the academic studies and practical possibilities regarding the innovations.

the LLU Classrooms are equipped according to the specifics of the study process. The informative basis for the LLU is in accordance with the specifics of the study direction, allowing students and teaching staff to achieve the corresponding academic outcomes and they comply with the specific features and conditions for the implementation of the study process. For the scientific research of publications, the LLU provides EBSCO, Science Direct, Scopus databases. Library provides scientific magazines and periodic on economics.

To enrich the study process quality, the LLU has cooperation in place with other scientific institutions and complies with the doctoral study programme requirements, allowing also to achieve good scientific and research outcomes.

Overall, the study foundation, information base (including the library), materials and technical base, and financial foundation correspond to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions, creating preconditions for the achievements of study outcomes. The LLU demonstrated the ability to ensure the delivery of a high-quality study process, also by attracting motivated teaching staff.

The LLU foresters also modernization of the teaching environment. The interactive Moodle tool has been launched to improve the information exchange between teaching staff and students, especially regarding the remote studies, considering also the provision of more study courses online, especially regarding the COVID-19 restrictions.

Overall, the study foundation, information base (including the library), materials and technical base, and financial foundation correspond to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions, creating preconditions for the achievements of study outcomes. The LLU demonstrated the ability to ensure the delivery of a high-quality study process.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

In general, the study foundation, information base (including libraries), material and technical base and financial foundation corresponds to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions and create preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes, thus, demonstrating the ability to ensure the delivery of a high-quality study process. The study and scientific base, including the necessary funding, allow ensuring the qualitative study process and outcomes of the study process thereof. the dependency on the EU funding is visible also once considering the budget and financial resources of the LLU. It is a benefit but at the same time can be seen as a risk, as ESF funding periods might not overlap and the LLU should be able to develop its academic potential not relying on the ESF funding solely. The LLU has developed a systemic approach to the internship measurement, also actively fostering internationalization.

The horizontal cooperation between different the LLU faculties was emphasized to the experts during the onsite visit.

### **Strengths:**

- Sufficient material and technical resource base.
- A modern library that fosters individual academic work of the students.
- Developed a system for internships and active participation in the student exchange programmes.

- In the implementation of the field of study, not only ESAF teaching personnel but also that of the other faculties of the LLU are engaged, ensuring mixed course delivery. Thus, students have the possibility to enhance their STEM skills.
- The interactive Moodle tool is available for the e-studies and its usage should be further developed, even considering the streaming of some courses online in the future.

#### Weaknesses:

- The necessity to maintain and supplement the sources of the library more often with the trending and up to date literature.
- Few IT tools used for the research process, such as software for data analysis.
- The LLU depends on the availability of the ESF funding for its development

## 4. Teaching Staff

### Analysis

The LLU is providing the study programme Economics professionally with its academic and professional teaching staff. In the academic year 2019/2020 the study programme is implemented by 38 academic staff members of the LLU in the academic master programme: 17 professors (including 2 professors emeritus), 9 associate professors, 6 assistant professors, and 6 lecturers. Compared to the previous assessment period, the number of teaching staff has decreased by 4, the number of lectures has decreased, but the number of professors increased (see page 105 of the Application study direction "Economics" for assessment. The LLU practices attracting visiting lecturers - industry professionals. There are financial restrictions to attract more actively the scientists and lecturers from abroad, also for the purpose of supervising doctoral student study process. For this purpose the ESF project No.8.2.2.0/18/A/104 "Enhancement of the Academic Personnel of the LLU". In general it was expressed to the experts that availability of the ESF funding is essential to provide competitive financing for the lecturers. LLU is taking the available and implementable preventive measures to renew its staff so that it would help to improve the study process and to provide it in accordance with the requirements of the legal acts. It promotes and supports the engagement of the young teaching personnel for the academic work. Of the current academic personnel 52% are less than 50 years old, 32% - in the age group 50 to 65, and only 16% are older than 65 years.

The teaching staff has the qualification necessary for the provision of the study programme Economics and comply with the requirements for the implementation of the professional study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. It enables the achievements of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. The study programme is regularly revised in order to comply with the changes in the labour market and according to the new trends of scientific papers. During the study year 2023/2024, it is foreseen to provide the study programme "Economics" in English.

The mechanism has been established in the LLU for the mutual cooperation of the teaching staff that facilitates the improvement of the course syllabus and fosters horizontal merger of study course materials. It was praised by the doctoral and master level students that the cooperation network is very strong between the teaching staff and exchange of opinions on a broader academic scope is welcome. This integrated approach to the study process will be promoted also in the future.

The teaching staff has the possibility to take part in the research projects carried out in Latvia nationwide to support the implementation of new products, services and technologies. Currently there is one project regarding the COVID-19 influence exploration. Most of the teaching personnel delivering the master programme Economics participate in scientific research (22 leading researchers and 7 researchers elected at the LLU are involved in the programme), and the results of the latest research are integrated into the learning process. For detailed information refer to the

self-assessment report. The main channels through which the academic personnel of the programme are engaged in research at national and international level are Horizon2020 projects (e.g. BioMonitor, DISARM); the ERA-NET network (RETHINK, SUMFOREST); national research programme projects (EKOSOC-LV, EVIDEnT, INTERFARME, DemoMig); research commissioned by the ministries of the Republic of Latvia (e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture project Forecasting Agricultural Development and Developing Policy Scenarios for 2050); cooperation projects with local governments and businesses (e.g. cooperation with the JSC Latvian State Forests) etc. There is active participation and involvement of the teaching personnel in various international organizations (e.g. the Baltic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural University Network (BOVA), the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, the Polish Council of Science etc.); participation in foreign scientific institutions as experts and members of the editorial boards of scientific journals (e.g. the Journal of Science Education etc.) and as speakers at various level scientific conferences, including plenary sessions. The scientific monographs produced as a result of research are included in the list of textbooks, methodological and scientific literature for the courses of the master programme Economics.

The study programme "Economics" is delivered by the LLU teaching staff according to the requirements for the implementation of this programme and the requirements required by the legal acts. It enables the achievements of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. The academic staff is highly involved in scientific research both at the national and international levels. The research outputs are used in the study process. Overall the active mutual cooperation of academic staff has facilitated the research in the faculty, as well as has helped to adjust the syllabus of the courses provided. There is mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members, which contributes to the improvement of the study courses and their correlation. However, formal mechanisms for collaboration should be formed and applied. Furthermore, it is recommended an increase of the junior faculty members (e.g. assistant professors) in the teaching process, since junior faculty is able to teach modern quantitative methods and newly developed economic subjects, since they have received their PhDs more recently than senior faculty members.

According to the information provided, the staff is highly involved in scientific research and it is evident from:

- 1) for the academic year 2017/2018 the LLU has concluded 48 bilateral cooperation agreements with the universities and research institutions from 22 countries, the LLU itself is a member of 39 international academic institution associations or networks. This builds a good base for research and cooperation opportunities.
- 2) academic publications as indicated in the Appendix No.6. The topics of the publications are generally related to the course delivered by the academic staff members. The LLU has implemented a system that provides each LLU researcher papers in journals indexed by Scopus or Web of Science. It is sourced from research performance funding for individual results.
- 3) Programme students (especially Ph.D. study programme) emphasized that faculty is motivating students to involve and carry out research projects. Students have the possibility to cooperate with foreign academic staff. The cooperation with other faculties of the LLU is welcomed, especially considering the growing role of digitalisation and forthcoming application possibilities of the artificial intelligence.
- 4) the teaching staff during the onsite visit demonstrated high level of interest and personal involvement in order to provide qualitative study process. Their professional devotion to the LLU is one of the core strengths of the LLU.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The programme is delivered by highly professional academic and professional teaching staff. In the

academic year 2019/2020, 38 academic personnel are involved in the academic master programme Economics: 17 professors, including 2 professors emeritus, 9 associate professors, 6 assistant professors, and 6 lecturers. Compared with the previous accreditation period, the number of teaching personnel involved in the

the programme has decreased by 4. In the academic year 2013/2014, there were 10 professors, and their

the number has increased by a third, yet the number of lecturers involved in the programme has decreased – before there were 10, and now 6. in the academic year 2019/2020, the teaching workload in the programme comprised 7.34 full-time equivalent positions or workloads.

The academic staff is highly involved in scientific research both at the national and international levels. The research outputs are used in the study process.

There is a mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members in place, which contributes to the improvement of the study courses and their correlation, however, more formal mechanisms could be recommended.

#### Strengths:

- The high qualification of the teaching staff, a high percentage of Ph.Ds
- Facilitation method for scientific research.
- Enthusiastic and dedicated staff that are motivated to broaden their knowledge and further the fields of research, as well as encourage each other and students to be active in the field of scientific research.
- High qualifications of the teaching staff, a high percentage of the Ph.Ds. (i.e. 82%).
- High productivity of research output (e.g. in terms of research papers is about  $100/38=2.63$ ).
- Good ratio of students to teaching personnel (i.e. 7.4:1)

#### Weaknesses:

- Reliance on the availability of the ESF funding to motivate the academic staff to carry out scientific research.
- Increase number of publications on research on emerging trends of economy regarding digital, smart, and Green Economy

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Economics"

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex Magistra\_diploms\_pielikums\_Ekon\_LV.rar

2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** the Annex Agreement between LLU and RTU.docx  
the Annex LLU confirmation\_Master program.docx

If the program is discontinued and students do not wish to continue their studies at LLU or RTU, they are reimbursed for their tuition fees.

- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** the Annex LLU confirmation\_Master program.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** the Annex LLU confirmation\_Bachelor program.docx

All the teaching personnel participating in the delivery of the program in Latvian have knowledge of the official language to perform their professional duties in compliance with the Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** the Annex LLU confirmation\_Master programme.doc

At least five professors and associate professors elected to academic positions at LLU participate in the delivery of compulsory and restricted elective courses of the programme

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** the Annex Studiju\_ligums\_paraugs\_EN.pdf

- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** the program was delivered in Latvian

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex\_14.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Council of Higher Education\_conclusion\_Master program.docx

12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex\_14.docx

13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 6, Annex 19, CV

Experts have analyzed the Excel files submitted by LLU for each member of the academic staff (publications time period: 2013.-2019.):

L.Feldmane- 1 publication, 2016

L.Joma -1 publication, 2019

B.Kizika - 1 publication, 2018

L.Perkune - 1 publication, 2019

I.Pētersone - 1 publication, 2016

V. Kozlinskis - 1 publication, 2013

S.Polovko - 1 publication, 2018

R.Rozentāle -1 publication, 2015

I.Rudusa -1 publication, 2017

Ā.Vitte -1 publication, 2017

L.Zvirgzdiņa - 1 publication, 2019

15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Attestation provided in Appendix LLU confirmation\_Master program.docx and evident from the discussions during the accreditation visit.

## Requirements (R6-R8)

1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Chapter 2.3.2. and evident from the discussions during the accreditation visit.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Appendix LLU confirmation\_Master program.docx

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Chapter III, Description of the study program, evident from the discussions during the accreditation visit.

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Master degree programme "Economics" progresses with the implementation of the research-based and student-centered learning conception. It has aligned study programme aims and learning outcomes with the courses' learning outcomes. The teaching staff has the qualification necessary for the provision of the study programme Economics and comply with the requirements for the implementation of the professional study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. The study foundation, information base (including the library), materials and technical base, and financial foundation correspond to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions, creating preconditions for the achievements of study outcomes.

### Strengths:

Highly motivated staff and students. Good feedback from graduates.

High qualifications of the teaching staff, a high percentage of the Ph.D. (i.e. 82%).

High productivity of research output (e.g. in terms of research papers is about  $100/38=2.63$ ).

Good ratio of students to teaching personnel (i.e. 7.4:1)

### Weaknesses:

- Insufficient subjects pertaining to public relations and psychology and to extend the use of various technologies in some current subjects.

- Insufficient involvement of master students in research and scientific research projects, which is the basis for their future doctoral studies.

- There is no distance learning option

- A low number of junior faculty members involved in the teaching process of the program.

- No formal mechanism of collaboration between faculty members, although collaboration seems to take place. A formalization of collaboration processes could be recommended.

## Evaluation of the study programme "Economics"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## 6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Economics"

### Short-term recommendations

Establish a more formal mechanism for collaboration between faculty members.
Increase financial support for master students via their participation in research projects.

Increase the number of foreign lecturers in delivering lectures.

The programme should include courses pertaining to public relations and psychology and to extend the use of various technologies in some current courses.

Further actions should be taken to complement theoretical studies with practice.

Increase the number of junior faculty members involved in the teaching process of the programme.

### **Long-term recommendations**

To expand cooperation with internationally recognized scholars and institutions relevant to the study programme.

More research papers must be published in highly ranked SCOPUS and ABS journals (i.e., those with high impact factor) as well as in top field journals in Economics, Agricultural Economics, Industrial Organization, Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Management, Marketing, etc. For example, aim at publishing in ABS-indexed journals with two or more stars.

## **II. "Agrarian and Regional Economics" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "Agrarian and Regional Economics" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

The topicality of courses of the Doctoral study programme Agrarian and Regional Economics (Education classification code 51311) is aligned with the overall topicality of the field of study The Study Programme "Agrarian and Regional Economics" of the study programme, the degree, the professional qualification or the degree and the professional qualification to be acquired, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated.

The theoretical courses of the programme are interconnected, and their successful completion and transfer of the acquired knowledge, skills, and competences to research work, incl. development of the Ph.D. thesis, the approbation of the research findings in the international environment (submission of scientific research papers for publication, reporting at international scientific conferences), and defense of the Ph.D. thesis, contribute to the programme's goal - to create intellectual, methodological, scientific, institutional and technical preconditions ensuring acquiring advanced-level theoretical knowledge, learning research and principles of research work organization, which are necessary for producing a quality Ph.D. thesis and earning a Doctoral Degree in Economics and Business in line with international standards that generally contributes to the emergence of a new generation of scientists for the economy who specialize in agrarian and regional economics, as well as interdisciplinary topics.

The programme is offered both in full-time (3 years) and part-time (4 years) in Latvian. Since academic year 2014/2015, the study programme is also offered full-time (3 years) in English. Admission requirements for the study programme is a master's degree or equivalent higher education. For international students English language skills of at least B2 level are required. For applicants of the programme there is a prerequisite that the topics of their PhD thesis have to pertain to agrarian or regional economics. There are 5 tasks defined for the study programme: 1) To provide doctoral students with advanced-level knowledge, specific skills and professional attitudes that enable them to successfully do scientific research in the agricultural or regional economy, as



well as in interdisciplinary topics. 2) To develop skills in identifying a research problem, formulating a hypothesis or research question, designing a research plan, planning data collection and analysis. 3) To train new scientists in economics who would be able to systematise, methodologically analyse primary and secondary data by using classical and the newest qualitative and quantitative methods, associate the results obtained with theoretical knowledge and introduce new research approaches. 4) To facilitate the publication of research findings by doctoral students in high-level international scientific publications available in internationally recognized databases. 5) To provide opportunities for doctoral students to disseminate their research findings among the international scientific community.

It provides also the opportunity for foreign students to study it in English, with a tuition fee set at EUR 4000 per semester for doctoral students. According to the information submitted by LLU in the Self Evaluation Report, three foreign doctoral students have been studying in the programme during the analysis period, yet their studies were unsuccessful and they were ex-matriculated for failure to fulfil their study contract obligations.

Foreign students apply for studies via the e-admission system Dream Apply, which provides partially formalized admission procedures, thereby significantly facilitating communication with LLU. Coordinators of the International Cooperation Centre (SSC) individually answer specific questions of the applicants. During the site visit experts were informed that SSC adjusts its approach and learns from other universities how to attract foreign students, select the appropriate candidates and integrate them in the LLU. The information regarding the admission is provided on the website of LLU - <https://www.llu.lv/en/how-to-apply>. Regarding the Doctoral study programme Agrarian and Regional Economics the information has been updated on 01/07/2016. The information is very concise and does not provide a broad range of topics covered, thus not providing sufficient information to the potential student (in this section - <https://apply.llu.lv/> - information on doctoral studies is missing at all). Yet no updates on the study process under the COVID-19 restrictions, no information of the remote study process as such. The enrolment conditions for students are not clearly emphasised, not providing the detailed information if students are actually able to study in English. Regarding the learning resources, it is not clear what resources would be available for foreign students, including the relevant support services for the student. As from the autumn semester of 2020, in accordance with changes in Latvian legislation, foreign students need to attach to their application a document issued by an international testing institution within the last five years that certifies that the foreigner has at least B2 level of English language skills. The mentioned document is not required if the foreigner has acquired secondary education or higher education in the language of delivery of the relevant programme. According to the information submitted by LLU in the Self Evaluation Report and LLU webpage, the accepted proof of proficiency in English is minimum IELTS score 6.0, TOEFL score 547, TOEFL-iBT score 76. Previously, according to the Self Evaluation Report, LLU conducted remote language skills interviews via Skype video calls to assess the potential student's English proficiency. The LLU International Cooperation Centre in cooperation with the LLU Language Centre conducted the interviews, interviewing the students on everyday issues, their educational backgrounds and motivations to study at LLU. If necessary, applicants were also asked to provide short written answers to identify their knowledge of English grammar. Applicants were awarded LLU Certificates of Compliance (or noncompliance) with the standard of English language proficiency required for studies at LLU.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The title of the study programme, the degree to be obtained, the professional qualification or the degree and the professional qualification, the aims, the tasks, the study results, and the admission requirements are mutually compatible.

#### Strengths

- the only regional university in this field, with good traditions and reputation
- interconnected programmes of good succession
- good prospects for graduates to transition to higher education
- Opportunity to integrate graduates of other programmes
- a personal approach towards each student

#### Weaknesses:

- a low number of foreign students in the study programme

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

### **Analysis**

The topicality of courses of the programme Agrarian and Regional Economics is aligned with the overall topicality of the field of study, which was described in subchapter 2.1.1 that gives a justification for developing the field of study and the programmes contained in it. The workload of the programme Agrarian and Regional Economics is 120 CP (180 ECTS), which consists of 30 CP (45 ECTS) theoretical studies and 90 CP (135 ECTS) research.

In order to achieve the goals, set for the programme, the doctoral student must complete his/her theoretical studies within the first two years so that the rest of the period of studies could be devoted to research, the doctoral dissertation, and presentation of research results at international scientific conferences and publication of their research papers in scientific, internationally indexed, anonymously peer-reviewed journals or conference proceedings. In accordance with Cabinet regulation No.1001 of 27 December 2005 Procedure and Criteria for Granting a Doctor of Science Degree (Ph.D.), a Degree in Economics and Business is granted to the Ph.D. thesis that has been independently developed under the supervision of an experienced scientist, has publicly defended and contains original research results and provides new insights into the relevant sub-branch of science, i.e. agrarian and regional economics. A decision on whether a doctoral degree has to be awarded or not is decided by the LLU Promotion Council for the sub-branches of Agrarian Economics and Regional Economics. During the reporting period, all decisions of the Promotion Council have been positive, indicating that the degrees awarded in this programme are based on original research relevant to the sub-branch of science and based on scientific achievements and findings.

Any Ph.D. thesis topic focuses on agrarian or regional economics and is associated with clearly defined research priorities prescribed by the Research Program 2015-2020 of Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies as well as meets the needs of the prospective economic sectors identified in the Smart Specialization Strategy of Latvia (<http://www.ris3.lv/>), in which Latvia's innovation capacity should be built up. These priorities are as follows: economics of sustainable development of bio-resource industries, research on sustainable territorial development, the efficiency of production processes, and competitiveness of enterprises. Interconnection among the courses and their alignment with the goal and learning outcomes of the programme are summarized in Annex 17 – Mapping of the study courses for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study programme Agrarian and Regional Economics. In accordance with the LLU Senate decision No.8-201 of 11 November 2015 Statute of Doctoral Studies at Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, during the period of studies, the doctoral student takes theoretical courses, passes promotional examinations, does research, presents the research results at scientific conferences, publishes them in internationally recognized and indexed scientific publications. At the end of the period of studies, the Ph.D. thesis and its summary have to be developed and submitted for defense. An important part of doctoral studies is theoretical courses to be taken. In accordance with the LLU Senate decision No.8-182 the LLU Regulations of Studies, the learning outcomes of the doctoral student are assessed according to two indicators: qualitative and quantitative. The learning process

consists of classroom work, independent studies, consultations, and tests. The teaching methods as well as the knowledge, skills, and competence acquired during the studies, the way and level of their acquisition, and the ways of learning are described in course syllabuses (Annex 19 –Descriptions of the study courses for the programme Agrarian and Regional Economics). In addition, the course syllabuses prescribe: test and examination methods; assessment criteria and methods, as well as the criteria for giving marks; the syllabuses are available in the Moodle system for eLearning and every teaching personnel member introduces doctoral students to their courses at the beginning of the course. Overall, the methods used for the assessment of learning outcomes in the courses are varied and aligned with the doctoral level and ensure the achievement of the goal of the programme. In the reporting period, 24 doctoral students have graduated from the doctoral programme, earning a Doctoral Degree in Economics for urgent and relevant research. Of the total Ph.D. thesis defended during the reporting period, 15 thesis covered topics related to regional economics, and 9 thesis – to agrarian economics. Of the doctoral students who defended their Ph.D. thesis, 50% received scholarships and awards, which indicates the relevance and urgency of the Ph.D. thesis. The descriptions of the study courses and the final thesis are of high quality and comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The content is relevant and complimentary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets the needs of the relevant industry and the scientific trends. In particular, Ph.D. thesis topic is related to the economics of sustainable development of bio-resource industries, research on sustainable territorial development, the efficiency of production processes, and competitiveness of enterprises and are considered important for the country and the region. The programme, however, should offer more elective courses, involve more foreign visiting scholars in the teaching and research process, and involve Ph.D. students more extensively in research projects. The study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods, contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centered learning and teaching principles are taken into account. The outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students, employers, and graduates are used to improve the quality of studies. The students avail themselves of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities, and the learning outcomes achieved during such mobility are recognized. However, outgoing mobility should increase.

Based on the results of surveys of students and alumni: the curricula of courses are enhanced; the practical implementation of the programme is enhanced; feedback on the performance of teaching personnel is provided; the involvement of foreign lecturers in the learning process was increased (international competitions for vacant academic positions were announced at <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu>). Based on the opinions of doctoral students and alumni on the willingness and necessity to participate in research projects and because of the relatively low availability of funding for research, two research and science support (university grants) programmes were established at the LLU: 1) Implementation of the LLU Research Program, and 2) Strengthening Scientific Research Capacity at the LLU. Outgoing mobility of doctoral students: During the reporting period, four doctoral students, with financial support from the ERASMUS+ programme, have visited Germany, the Netherlands, and Lithuania and gained valuable experience in the universities of these countries. Incoming mobility of doctoral students in the reporting period, three doctoral students from other countries visited the LLU in relation to the doctoral programme Agrarian and Regional Economics.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The descriptions of the study courses and the final thesis are of high quality and comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The content is relevant and complimentary, and it

complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets the needs of the relevant industry and the scientific trends.

Programme "Agrarian and Regional Economics" study implementation methods, including the evaluation

methods, contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centered learning and teaching principles are taken into account.

The students avail themselves of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities, and the learning outcomes achieved during such mobility are recognized.

The outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students are used to improve the quality of studies.

#### Strengths

- Descriptions of study courses are very detailed and information about its syllabus is well described. Topics, skills, and potential competencies are all listed.
- Most course descriptions include detailed information on topics.
- Unique study programme in the Baltics States

#### Weaknesses :

- It has been noted that course descriptions are not developed by the same design (format differences). It is recommended to emphasize different teaching methods that allow obtaining the goal of the course.
- It has been noticed that there are discrepancies in the information provided on the provision of study courses. In the CVs of academic personnel, the information on study courses provided is lacking, it is recommended to include information not only on academic achievements but professional experience as well, if possible.
- A low number of elective subjects
- A low number of foreign visiting scholars during the teaching and research process.
- Increase involvement number of Ph.D. students in research projects with the provision of financial support
- Low mobility of Ph.D. students.

### 3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

#### Analysis

The learning process in the field of study occurs mostly in the building of the Faculty of Economics and Social Development (ESAF). The technological resources are renewed every year. Three modern computer classrooms with 64 desktop computers and 5 desktop computers at ESAF's Centre for Studies and Scientific Information are at the disposal of doctoral students. In addition, doctoral students may use desktop computers in the reading room of the LLU Fundamental Library, equipped with the following software: Autodesk EDU Master suite 2018 (AutoCAD, AutoCADStructural Detailing, Autodesk Robot Structural Analysis Professional etc.), CorelDRAW X7, SPSS Statistics v21, VISIO 2013. Access to the wireless (Wi-Fi) Internet is provided in ESAF to students and guests. A multicore optical cable network is constructed among the LLU buildings in Jelgava city, which provides a highperformance data flow (up to 10G) among the Faculties of the LLU for interdisciplinary research. Doctoral students also use the rest of the infrastructure and learning environment of the LLU, which includes hostels, the LLU Fundamental Library, facilities and laboratories.

To provide the learning process student-focused and more convenient, ESAF has established the Centre for Studies and Scientific Information as an information, research and communication contact point. It is maintained and replenished by ESAF from its own budget. Specific social science

literature is available to doctoral students at the Centre for Studies and Scientific Information; its total stock is about 4,000 books, as well as current periodicals. The LLU FB users have an opportunity to obtain information on economics from the following subscribed foreign and national online databases: CAB Abstracts, CRC Press e-books, the EBSCO eBook Academic Collection database covering a wide range of multidisciplinary topics and containing more than 228515 e-books, EBSCO host databases Academic Search Complete, MasterFILE Premier and others ScienceDirect Journals, Scopus, SciVal, Web of Science, Wiley Online Journals and Lursoft.

The doctoral programme's financial base is comprised of government-funded study places that represent a government funding transfer for ensuring the educational process that is distributed within the LLU in a centralised way, covering reimbursement for teaching and support personnel and other costs. Since 2017, the LLU programme Strengthening Scientific Research Capacity at the LLU has provided substantial financial support for doctoral students to do research and present the research results in the international environment (international scientific conferences, research paper proceedings and journals). Under this programme, doctoral students apply for research grants on a competitive basis. Since 2017, seven doctoral students from the programme have received such grants, which are granted for two years and may not exceed EUR 8000, thereby attracting EUR 28,053 for the implementation of their research.

the LLU has common laboratories for all the Faculties. Doctoral students working on interdisciplinary research problems cooperate with the following laboratories: the Forest and Water Resources Laboratory (GHG emission equipment; groundwater streams and analysis monitoring equipment) equipped with specific computer software for data processing; the GIS Data Processing And Modelling Laboratory having ArcGIS software and specific computer hardware for map processing, scanning, work with the digital map of Latvia; the Biotechnology Laboratory with a division equipped for doing agronomic tests and a division for molecular biology and microbiology. All the laboratories are fully equipped with the necessary hardware, and wireless Internet access (Wi-Fi) is available in all the buildings.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

In general, the study foundation, information base (including libraries), material and technical base, and financial foundation corresponds to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation

conditions and create preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes, thus, demonstrating the ability to ensure the delivery of a high-quality study process. The LLU has developed a system to determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study direction and the relevant study programmes. In general, creating a good infrastructure for professors and doctoral students, there are technical equipment and IT support. During the visit experts obtained the information from local and international students on the fact that the academic personnel is translating literature from Russian by themselves (as per student's recollection, no more than two pages at a time). Therefore, it is not a problem for students that are not proficient in Russian. On the other hand, for students that are lacking English language skills, it provides the access to foreign academic literature. Many of the literature sources mentioned in study course descriptions were from the years 2000-2002; rarely the study course descriptions implied the use of literature newer than 2014.

Strengths:

- The LLU has developed a system to determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study direction and the relevant study programmes
- Well-equipped library (mostly e-library) which includes different databases: EBSCO, Science Direct,

SCOPUS databases, etc., the latest literature is included, the collection is being restored regularly, the academic staff actively publishes their works in books.

Weaknesses:

- A small amount of the latest literature in the library collection, recommends the inclusion of direct sources rather than translations (especially in Russian).

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

In numerical terms from the academic year 2013/2014 to the academic year 2016/2017, 21 teaching personnel were involved in the delivery of the programme, with an average workload of 2.86 in the academic year 2018/2019. The ratio of students to workload is 10.8: 1, i.e. 10.8 students per workload. This ratio indicates that the involvement of teaching personnel in the delivery of the doctoral programme is short-term and accounts for a very little workload, and all the teaching personnel are involved in the delivery of other programmes. The breakdown of the teaching personnel by position, study work and workload are summarized in a relevant table provided in the self-assessment report. To assure the quality of studies and deliver the programme, the teaching personnel involved representing various fields and the LLU organizational units: seven teaching personnel are from the Institute of Economics and Regional Development (ESAF), two from the Institute of Finance and Accounting (ESAF), three from the Institute of Business and Management Science (ESAF), one from the Institute of Social and Human Sciences (ESAF), one from the Department of Computer Systems (Faculty of Information Technologies), three from the Department of Control Systems (Faculty of Information Technologies), one from the Institute of Soil and Plant Sciences (Faculty of Agriculture) and three from the Language Centre.

In the delivery of the programme, 21 teaching personnel are involved, 9 or 43% of them are professors, 2 or 9.5% are professors (Emeritus), 4 or 19% are associate professors, 3 or 14% are assistant professors, 2 or 9.5% are visiting assistant professors, 1 or 5% is a visiting lecturer. Of the total teaching personnel, 95% have a doctoral degree, 10 of them are experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science (LZP) in the field of Economics and Business: Such a composition and qualification level of teaching personnel ensures that the programme is delivered by highly qualified academic and research personnel of the LLU, complying with and the requirements of Section 55 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the requirements of the Statute of Doctoral Studies of Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies. The high qualification level of teaching personnel as well as their experience in teaching and in research and organizational work ensure that the achievement of expected learning outcomes is maximized, and the programme is delivered at the highest level of quality.

In the reporting period, the academic personnel involved in the delivery of the programme published 464 scientific research papers, of which 255 or 55% were published in journals or conference proceedings indexed by the Scopus or Web of Sciences CC databases. The most research papers were published in 2017 and 2018 – 117 research papers each year. The high activity in publishing scientific research papers is due to the fact that great attention is paid to the dissemination of research findings among the scientist community and the general public, both at the international and national level, because it represents part of the LLU Research Program that has set targets, and the performance of academic personnel is assessed every year. To encourage the publication of research findings in indexed journals and to facilitate other types of scientific activities, LLU has developed a system that motivates each researcher, as research performance funding is provided to each researcher and is directly dependent on the researcher's previous year's performance.

In the reporting period, the academic personnel involved in the delivery of the doctoral programme as project managers or principal executives has been involved in 9 international-level projects and 22 national-level projects, attracting a total of EUR 3.9 million (international projects – EUR 1.1

million; national projects – EUR 2.9 million). The most important projects implemented and started during the reporting period are summarized in a table provided in the self-assessment report.

All the research activities are applied in the learning process as follows: doctoral students are involved in research projects as researchers and the doctoral dissertations produced are one of the results to be achieved in the projects; doctoral students are actively involved in popularizing science and public discussions with industry professionals; the relevant industry offers doctoral students to explore new and urgent research problems in cooperation with industry entrepreneurs and associations; academic personnel incorporates research-based findings into the learning process; academic personnel who are experts in science establish scientific cooperation. Cooperation among teaching personnel is an important driver of development, which is promoted at different levels in the programme: At ESAF organizational unit level; at ESAF level; At the interfaculty level; At interuniversity level.

The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments, and it enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. The scientific publications of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme and the involvement of the academic staff in research-related projects contribute to the implementation of a high-quality doctoral study programme. The academic staff is involved in scientific research (in the fields related to the content of the study programme) both at national and international level. The obtained information is used in the study process. There is mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members, which contributes to the improvement of the study courses and their correlation. However, formal mechanisms for collaboration should be formed and applied. Furthermore, it is recommended an increase of the junior faculty members (e.g. assistant professors) in the teaching process, since junior faculty is able to teach modern quantitative methods and newly developed economic subjects, since they have received their PhDs more recently than senior faculty members.

### **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The high qualification level of teaching personnel as well as their experience in teaching and in research and organizational work ensure that the achievement of expected learning outcomes is maximized, and the programme is delivered at the highest level of quality. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments, and it enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. The scientific publications of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme and the involvement of the academic staff in research-related projects contribute to the implementation of a high-quality doctoral study programme.

Strengths:

- High qualifications of the teaching staff, a high percentage of the Ph.Ds. (i.e. 95%).
- High productivity of research output (e.g. 464 scientific research papers, of which 255 or 55% were published in journals or conference proceedings indexed by the Scopus or Web of Sciences CC databases).
- Good ratio of students to teaching personnel (i.e. 10.8 students per workload)

Weaknesses:

- A low number of junior faculty members are involved in the teaching process of the programme.

- No formal mechanism of collaboration between faculty members, although collaboration seems to take place. A formalization of collaboration processes could be recommended.

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Agrarian and Regional Economics"

### Requirements

1. The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex Annex\_Doctoral diploma.pdf
2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex Agreement between LLU and RTU.docx
3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex LLU confirmation\_PhD program.docx
4. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex LLU confirmation\_PhD program.docx
5. The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex\_6.rar and Europass\_EN.rar
6. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex LLU confirmation\_PhD program.docx
7. The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** LLU confirmation\_PhD program.docx
8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant



**Justification:** Annex\_Study agreement.pdf

- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex\_18.docx,  
Annex 17.xlsx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Council of Higher Education\_conclusion\_PhD program.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** See page 126 (Section III) of the self-assessment report. See also Annex\_6.

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Document review and interviews during the visit

## Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** See pages 111-138 in the self-assessment report.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** See pages 111-138 in the self-assessment report.

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** See pages 111-138 in the self-assessment report.

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The descriptions of the study courses and the final thesis are of high quality and comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The content is relevant and complimentary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets the needs of the relevant industry and the scientific trends. In particular, Ph.D. thesis topics are related to the economics of sustainable development of bio-resource industries, research on sustainable territorial development, the efficiency of production processes, and competitiveness of enterprises and are considered important for the country and the region. The programme, however, should offer more elective courses, involve more foreign visiting scholars in the teaching and research process, and involve Ph.D. students more extensively in research projects. The study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods, contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centered learning and teaching principles are taken into account. The outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students, employers, and graduates are used to improve the quality of studies. The students avail themselves of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities, and the learning outcomes achieved during such mobility are recognized. However, outgoing mobility should increase. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments, and it enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. The scientific publications of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme and the involvement of the academic staff in research-related projects contribute to the implementation of a high-quality doctoral study programme. The academic staff is involved in scientific research (in the fields related to the content of the study programme) both at the national and international levels. The obtained information is used in the study process. There is a mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members, which contributes to the improvement of the study courses and their correlation. However, formal mechanisms for collaboration should be formed and applied. Furthermore, it is recommended an increase of the junior faculty members (e.g. assistant professors) in the teaching process, since junior faculty is able to teach modern quantitative methods and newly developed economic subjects since they have received their Ph.Ds more recently than senior faculty members.

### Strengths

- Unique study programme
- High qualifications of the teaching staff, a high percentage of the Ph.D. (i.e. 95%).
- High productivity of research output (e.g. 464 scientific research papers, of which 255 or 55% were published in journals or conference proceedings indexed by the Scopus or Web of Sciences CC

databases).

- Good ratio of students to teaching personnel (i.e. 10.8 students per workload)

#### Weaknesses

- A too little number of elective courses in the programme.
- The insufficient number of foreign visiting scholars in the teaching and research process.
- The insufficient number of Ph.D. students involved in research projects with the provision of financial support.
- An inadequate number of outgoing mobility by Ph.D. students should increase.
- A low number of junior faculty members involved in the teaching process of the programme.
- No formal mechanism of collaboration between faculty members, although collaboration seems to take place. A formalization of collaboration processes could be recommended.

### Evaluation of the study programme "Agrarian and Regional Economics"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### 6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Agrarian and Regional Economics"

#### Short-term recommendations

Increase financial support for Ph.D. students via their participation in research projects.

Increase the number of foreign lecturers in delivering lectures.

Increase the number of junior faculty members involved in the teaching process of the programme.

To add more elective subjects to the programme

To encourage students for international mobility

Update the information on LLU's website to provide more detailed and relevant information for the potential students from abroad, including the access to learning resources.

#### Long-term recommendations

To expand cooperation with internationally recognized scholars and institutions relevant to the study program.

More research papers must be published in highly ranked SCOPUS and ABS journals (i.e., those with high impact factor) as well as in top field journals in Economics, Agricultural Economics, Industrial Organization, Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Management, Marketing, etc. For example, aim at publishing in ABS-indexed journals with two or more stars.

## III. Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

### III. Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

#### Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation	Comment
Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:	Fully compliant	<p>Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems: *</p> <p>The quality management system of the LLU is part of the overall the LLU Development Strategy and covers a broad spectrum of matters. A general description of the LLU Quality Management System and the Quality Assurance Plan approved 10/10/2016. The quality management system of the LLU is externally audited every two years and a certificate was granted to the LLU both in 2016 (first audit) and in 2018 (repeated audit).</p> <p>This was confirmed by the information gathered during meetings with the highest leadership of the university, students, and directors of study programs which were executed in a 'questions and answers' format.</p> <p>The quality management system of the LLU is part of the overall LLU Development Strategy and covers a broad spectrum of matters. A general description of the LLU Quality Management System and the Quality Assurance Plan are available at <a href="https://www.llu.lv/sites/default/files/2016-10/KV_cepure_4_1.pdf">https://www.llu.lv/sites/default/files/2016-10/KV_cepure_4_1.pdf</a>. (See page 12 in the self-assessment report)</p>
R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.	Fully compliant	<p>Cooperation agreements with private enterprises, government organizations, NGOs, HEIs, and scientific institutions serve as evidence of cooperation, including cooperation in the provision of internship places, and organization of internships provided in the plans of study programmes.</p> <p>Particularly welcome opportunities offered by international networks for researcher training: cooperation agreements have been concluded (e.g. in the academic year 2017/2018, the LLU has concluded 48 bilateral cooperation agreements with universities and research institutions of 22 countries, and the LLU is a member of 39 international academic institution associations or networks. Should be emphasized agreement with AERES University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands) for Consecutive Bachelor's degree. Increase research output as well as outgoing and ingoing mobility of students and researchers.</p>

<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Requirement Evaluation</b>		<b>Comment</b>
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).	Fully compliant		A very well thought out and wide network, including Agreement on cooperation between higher education institutions in the field of studies and scientific research in case of termination of the professional Master's study programme Smart Economics and Implementation of Innovation of the DU's study direction "Economics"; cooperation agreement in the field of research and innovation, improvement of education and further education programmes, the scientific expertise of projects and research, and development of the human and material-technical base etc. Higher targets should be placed for promoting excellence in research such highly ranked SCOPUS and ABS journals (i.e., those with high impact factor) as well as publishing in top field journals in Economics, Agricultural Economics, Industrial Organization, Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Management, Marketing etc
R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.	Fully compliant		The Expert's conclusions were simply based on the documentation provided, interviews, and evolution during the visit.

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

<b>No.</b>	<b>Study programme</b>	<b>R5</b>	<b>R6</b>	<b>R7</b>	<b>R8</b>	<b>Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)</b>
1	Economics (43311)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
2	Economics (45311)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

<b>No.</b>	<b>Study programme</b>	<b>R5</b>	<b>R6</b>	<b>R7</b>	<b>R8</b>	<b>Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)</b>
3	Agrarian and Regional Economics (51311)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

### **The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts**