

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: University of Daugavpils

Study field: Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes

Experts:

1. Indra Karapetjana (Chair of the Experts Group)
2. Jolita Horbačauskienė (Secretary of the Experts Group)
3. Ene Alas
4. Ilona Kiukucāne (Employers' Confederation of Latvia)
5. Kristaps Opincāns (Student Union of Latvia)

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

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

The expert panel was assigned to assess the study field 'Language and Culture Studies, Mother tongue Studies, and Language Programmes' and the four relevant study programmes under the field at Daugavpils University (DU). The panel analysed the Self Evaluation Report (SER) prepared by DU, participated in the on-site evaluation visit to the University and prepared a joint opinion report. Three experts participated in the onsite visit in person, while the remaining two participated in the visit interviews online.

In the joint opinion report, the expert panel assesses the compliance of the study field and the study programmes with the relevant requirements and the criteria for such programmes, highlights the strengths and weaknesses of each component and suggests possible steps to be implemented to ensure the sustainability and the improvement of the evaluated programmes and the study field.

The study field (the term used interchangeably with the term 'study direction' in this report) complies with the scope of the activities and the strategic development field of DU. Moreover, the aim of the study field complies with the development needs of society, especially promoting the socio-economic development of the Latgale region. The management system of the study field is functional, but the study direction development plan lacks quantitative indicators and persons responsible for the implementation of the plan.

Different degrees are awarded within the study field 'Language and Culture Studies, Mother tongue Studies, and Language Programmes': Bachelor of Humanities in Eastern European Cultural Studies; Bachelor of Humanities in Literature and Linguistics with specialisation in one of the directions: Latvian philology, Russian philology, English philology; Master of Humanities in Literature and Linguistics with specialisation in one of the following directions: Latvian philology, Russian philology, English philology, Comparative philology, and Professional Master's degree in Intercultural Relations and a qualification of a strategic communication manager.

The academic bachelor study programme (ABSP) 'Language and Culture Studies' complies with the study field. The aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the programme comply with the needs of society, especially in the Latgale region. The aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and consistent. The duration and the scope of the study programme implementation, as well as the implementation languages are reasonable and justified. The study programme is socially justified. The sub-programme: Latvian Studies is strategically important in the Latgale region. The graduates of the sub-programme majoring in English are employed in the relevant or related fields, and the sub-programme majoring in Russian studies has ample employment and internship opportunities in the region. The content of the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' has a clear rationale for the curriculum; it is comprehensive and incorporates a wide variety of subjects which aim to meet knowledge, skill and competency outcomes that have been aligned for all the proposed sub-programmes. The programme utilizes a wide variety of methodological approaches including e-learning to ensure learner-centeredness during studies. While internship is included in the programme, its scope is too small and its content fairly ambiguous to significantly contribute to the study outcomes.

The duration, scope, and implementation languages of the academic bachelor's study programme (ABSP) 'Eastern European Culture and Business Relations' are reasonable and justified. The aims, objectives and learning outcomes are interrelated. The programme attracts international students,

especially from the US. The graduates are employed in a variety of fields. However, the programme is partly related to the study field 'Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue studies, and Language Programmes', and it is poorly connected to the "Bachelor's Degree of Humanities in Language Studies and Programmes" that it claims to award. The courses mostly focus on topics connected to cultural and business studies. The numerous courses employ diverse methodological approaches but due attention should be paid to the scope of independent work expected in different courses – the variety is notable. The internship has been appropriately managed but its content has not been adequately described in the SER.

The academic master study programme (AMSP) 'Philology and Language Practices' complies with the study field. The aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the programme meet the needs of society, especially in the Latgale region. The aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and consistent. The duration, scope, and the implementation languages of the study programme are reasonable and justified. However, the number of students enrolled in the programme seems to be too small for all the sub-programmes to be financially feasible.

The professional master study programme (PMSP) 'Intercultural relations' is an interdisciplinary study programme, the results being oriented towards building professional competence and research potential. Graduates with a bachelor's academic degree or second-level higher professional education in philology, history, economics, management, art, music, sociology, library science, cultural studies are admitted to the study programme, which testifies to the interdisciplinary nature of the programme; on the other hand, it is too broad for a degree to be assigned in the Humanities, according to the regulations. Yet, the degree to be awarded is 'Professional Master's Degree in Intercultural Relations, and the qualification to be obtained is 'Strategic Communications Manager'. Thus, the programme is not related to the Humanities and the study field 'Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes'.

The content of the study programme does not meet all the requirements of the qualification to be obtained either. Despite that, economic and social justification of the study programme and the employment indicators prove that the programme has perspectives in the region.

DU has adopted the 'Internal Quality Assurance Policy of Studies at Daugavpils University', which is publicly available on the DU website. The policy is aimed at contributing to the achievement of the aims and the learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes. The procedures for the development and review of the study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms – in particular student, employer, and graduate surveys have been defined and are operational. Internal regulations that stipulate ways the students can submit complaints and proposals on improving the quality of studies and the environment at DU are explained to the students and are publicly available on the DU website. The statistical data collection mechanism ensures regular collection and analysis of information on the study programmes corresponding to the study field. However, the internal quality assurance system does not always ensure efficient management of the study field and study programmes at all levels, as there does not seem to be a clear link between the content, the learning outcomes and the degree or qualification awarded in some programmes. The lack of apparent key performance indicators makes it hard to track the overall success of the implemented activities and the efficiency of DU goal achievement.

Despite the high number of scientific publications assigned to the study field under evaluation, the number of Scopus or WoS indexed papers is relatively small with high number of papers in conference proceedings. The research activities are good at the national level; however, the scientific participation at the international level should be increased; thus, the research excellence

of the faculty should be pursued.

DU acknowledges the importance of successful cooperation with employers, higher education institutions (HEIs), and municipalities in Latvia as a key factor for the effective functioning and development of the study direction and the study programmes. The cooperation with employers, municipalities and HEIs is claimed to be manifold but could have been made more transparent through concrete lists of cooperation ties. Mechanisms of attracting students and faculty to DU are in place, but the problems related to student and faculty mobility have not been addressed in the report. Overall, the SER testifies to an adequate level of cooperation and internationalization.

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

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

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

##### **Analysis**

The aim of the study field to prepare 'academic specialists' is achievable, although the concept 'academic' specialists needs clarification. Three out of four programmes in the study field submitted for accreditation are academic programmes, but one is a professional programme. It seems inaccurate to claim that the programmes prepare 'teachers, editors, specialists in e-text and advertising, press secretaries'.

The study field implements three-cycle higher education. The study programmes are interconnected in the sense that they comprise language- and culture-related courses and that the students have an opportunity to continue their studies in the next level of education. In the previous accreditation period, the doctoral study programmes "Literary Science" [sic. "Literary Studies"] and "Linguistics" were offered. The doctoral study programmes have not been submitted for accreditation since a joint doctoral study programme "Language and Literature Studies" has been submitted for licensing. Despite the importance of the three-cycle education offer, it has to be mentioned that referring to the would-be licensed programme in the self-assessment report too often seems disturbing since it shifts the focus from the programmes submitted for assessment.

The aim of the study field complies with the scope of the activities and the strategic development field of DU. 'Daugavpils University Development Strategy 2015 - 2020' has been extended by the Ministry of Science and Education until a new strategy is approved. However, the lack of the strategy may put the study field development at risk.

The aim of the study field complies with the development needs of society and the national economy. The study field benefits society in a number of ways. It promotes the socio-economic development of Daugavpils and the Latgale region, as there is a direct economic benefit, namely, the graduates of the study field enter the job market across a wide range of professions, e.g. native language and literature, intercultural relations, foreign language and literature specialists (e.g. teachers, educators), e-text and advertising specialists, press secretaries, which increases the competitiveness and ensures the sustainability of Daugavpils, the Latgale region and the whole country. The study field programmes foster tolerance and understanding between people and cultures, enable the graduates to understand and preserve the national language and culture.

Different degrees are planned to be awarded within the study field 'Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes': Bachelor of Humanities in Eastern European

Cultural Studies; Bachelor of Humanities in Literature and Linguistics with specialisation in one of the directions: Latvian philology, Russian philology, English philology; Master of Humanities in Literature and Linguistics with specialisation in one of the following directions: Latvian philology, Russian philology, English philology, Comparative philology, and Professional Master's degree in Intercultural Relations and a qualification of a strategic communication manager.

Two study programmes submitted for accreditation are related to the study field, namely, the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' and the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices'.

The content and the learning outcomes of the ABSP 'Eastern European Cultural and Business Relations' indicate that the programme is partly related to the study field. In 'International Standard Classification of Education (ISCE), code 231 corresponds to code 227 of the classification of the Latvian education system. ISCE code 231 refers to language acquisition and includes the study of related cultures, literature, linguistics and phonetics if related to the specific language being acquired. The learning outcomes of the ABSP 'Eastern European Cultural and Business Relations' concern such fields as journalism, advertising, legislation, media, financial aspects, sociology, economics, political science, psychology. There are no learning outcomes concerning languages, literature and linguistics. The programme comprises some restricted elective language acquisition courses. The admission requirements, the content of the PMSP 'Intercultural Relations' as well as the qualification to be obtained: 'Strategic communications manager' indicate that the programme is not related to the study field.

The SWOT analysis has identified and assessed internal and external forces impacting the study field. The report provides information on how the SWOT analysis was performed, who and what structural units were involved in its elaboration and approval, as well as how the analysis assisted in strategic planning. It also expands on what has been done to solve internal weaknesses.

One of the opportunities concerns using an individual approach to each student. During the on-site interviews with the academic staff, students and graduates, an individual approach to each student was highlighted, so this should have been mentioned as a strength of the study field. The majority of the items in the study field development plan (till 2026) concern the introduction of new subprogrammes and participation in research activities and do not arise from the SWOT analysis. The section 'general questions' is too general. Moreover, there are no quantitative indicators, and responsibilities for the implementation of the plan have not been assigned.

The structure of the management of the study field, the described tasks and responsibilities, cooperation with other DU structural units, the administrative and technical support provided testify to the existence of the management system, which is adequate to reach the aim of the study field. Some use of terminology in English is rather disturbing: "the Study Board Direction" is referred to as "the Council for Studies", but in Annex 2.1.3: "the programme director" has been referred to as 'the manager', which implies different responsibilities. According to the Regulations for the opening and management of study directions and study programmes at Daugavpils University, a study programme director supervises and coordinates the implementation of the study programme and is approved by the Senate. Although not specified in the Regulations, it is known that in the academic context managers act as support personnel ensuring the day-to-day functioning of the programme. Comparing the management scheme with the variant in the Latvian language, it is seen that this misunderstanding has occurred due to unsuccessful translation. More importantly, the figure revealing the study field management structure seems relevant only partially, as two programmes mentioned have not been submitted for accreditation, namely, ABSP 'Philology' and AMSP 'Philology'. Thus, the role of the ABSP "Language and Culture Studies" with the four sub-programmes

and AMSP "Philology and Language Practices" have not been revealed in the management structure of the study field. The confusion with the translation has been sorted out by the Latvian-speaking members of the accreditation team, and the issue with the wrong programmes included in the Annex have been clarified. Nevertheless, this signals inadequate quality assurance at different levels. Thus, it is recommended that a document quality control system is elaborated.

Matriculation in the study programmes takes place in accordance with approved admission rules for studies and is approved annually by the DU Faculty Council. Admission regulations for DU have been issued in accordance with internal and external regulations; however, the admission requirements of PMSP 'Intercultural relations' are too broad - they extend beyond the study field "Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes" and comprise "Academic bachelor's degree or second level professional education in philology, history, economics, management, art, music, sociology, library science, culture".

The assessment of the methods and procedures for the evaluation of students' achievements is carried out according to the principles outlined in the regulations on the state standard of academic education. Formative and summative assessment is used, and different evaluation methods are employed, but a greater variety should be applied. Students are informed about the assessment criteria and procedures in the course descriptions in the E-environment. At the beginning of each course, they are informed about the requirements of the study course, knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired. The conformity of assessment methods and procedures with the achievement of the aims of study programmes and students' needs is studied with the help of student surveys. If any problems are detected, they are attended to.

The Code of Ethics provides ethical guidelines for DU employees and students. The principles of academic integrity are stipulated in the 'Regulations on Studies at Daugavpils University' and are operational. The concept of plagiarism is explained to students, and DU follows the 'Procedure for submission of final works for plagiarism control at Daugavpils University'. All final examination papers are examined prior to the defence using plagiarism control system PLAG LV (plag.lv). Thus, the existing system promotes the development of the internal culture of DU; however, a more efficient plagiarism detection system available throughout the study process would assist academic staff in their job as well as help students avoid plagiarism in due time.

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

To conclude, the study field complies with the scope of the activities and the strategic development field of Daugavpils University. Moreover, the aim of the study field complies with the development needs of society and the national economy. The SWOT analysis has identified and assessed internal and external forces impacting the study field. The management system of the study field is functional, as the tasks and responsibilities are divided among the management of the study field and the structural units of DU. The system for the admission of students and the recognition of the previously acquired education is feasible. There is a policy on academic integrity at DU.

### **Strengths**

1. The study field complies with the development needs of society and the national economy, especially promoting the socio-economic development of the Latgale region.
2. The DU management system allows for a clear distribution of tasks and responsibilities.
3. The study field will implement three-cycle higher education after joint doctoral study programme is licenced.

## Weaknesses

1. The PMSP 'Intercultural Relations' is not related to the study field "Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes".
2. The ABSP 'Eastern European Cultural and Business Relations' is partly related to the study field "Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes".
3. The study direction/field development plan only partially arises from the SWOT analysis. It lacks quantitative indicators and persons responsible for the implementation of the plan.
4. There is the lack of a plagiarism detection system available throughout the study process.

## 1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

### Analysis

DU has adopted the 'Internal Quality Assurance Policy of Studies at Daugavpils University', which is binding on students, academic staff and general staff of DU. It is available on the DU website, so the policy is publicly available. DU Study Quality Assessment Centre controls and maintains a quality assurance system and, in collaboration with the DU management, the study field management, the Study Direction Council, the relevant faculties and departments, is responsible for ensuring the quality and management system of the study process to guarantee the conformity of the content of the programmes with the higher education standard, the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the study programmes.

However, the quality assurance system does not always ensure efficient management of the study processes in the field and the relevant study programmes. For example, there does not seem to be a clear link between the programme content and the degree awarded, e.g., the degree to be awarded in the ABSP 'Eastern European Culture and Business Relations' is 'Bachelor's Degree of Humanities in Language Studies and Programs'. However, the content and the learning outcomes of the ABSP, which are related to culture, sociology, economics, history of art, and politics, indicate that the programme is only partly related to the study field. The content of the PMSP 'Intercultural relations' does not meet all the requirements of the qualification to be obtained: 'Strategic Communications Manager' and does not relate to the study field submitted for accreditation.

Although it is expected that the system ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes, the quality assurance system functioning needs improvement at all levels to avoid data inconsistencies of the awarded degrees, international students or curriculum mapping, for example. It is claimed (SER) that the quality assurance system implements a resource saving approach, at the same time - it provides support for the solution of financial problems. However, there is no information on financial sustainability of study sub-programmes with a small number of students.

The lack of apparent key performance indicators (KPIs) makes it hard to track overall success of implemented activities and how well DU goals are achieved. Most of the SER is a description of how the system works but does not provide enough KPIs tracking the progress in the attainment of the set goals and monitoring the performance. For example, to achieve the goals of the study field, it needs strategic planning and metrics, which are made up of measurements against a goal. The programmes and sub-programmes have been seeing steady decline in enrolments. They should have used the year-over-year enrolment KPI metrics and developed a strategy setting firm goals (incl. measurement frequencies, dates and visual charts) and persons in charge to increase enrolments. Financial KPIs of sub-programmes and, likewise, a ratio between incoming mobility students and the number of outgoing students in the programmes have not been provided. The KPI's on research activities are not available either, which makes it difficult to monitor the progress.

The process of development and the review of study programmes is regulated by internal and external regulations. The study field submits an annual self-assessment report to the DU Study Quality Assessment Centre, which includes mandatory annual student, graduate, and employer surveys, which allow for the evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes. Surveys are a key means to find out the opinions of students, employers, and graduates in order to improve the quality of study courses, study programmes, and academic staff performance. During the on-site interview, it was found out that, taking into account the changes in the study mode during the pandemic, oral and written opinion surveys were conducted regularly, and the recommendations were considered at the Council of Study Direction. Other ways of ensuring the study field quality are regular activities comprising expert examination of individual components of the programme, the involvement of employers and graduates of DU in the Study Direction Council, coordination of the programme content with labour market demands, participation of graduates in the study process of DU and by providing internships and workplaces. The proposed amendments to the content of the study programmes submitted for accreditation have been reviewed following the procedures described in the internal and external regulations. The taken measures and activities were confirmed during the interviews with graduates, employers and the study field management. Thus, the experts believe that feedback mechanisms, including feedback to students, employers, and graduates are logical and efficient. Moreover, academic staff take part in professional development courses, apply the acquired knowledge and skills when delivering their courses.

The Study Direction Council, the departments which implement the study programmes, and the Faculty Council are involved in the evaluation of the study process.

Although it is claimed (SER) that lecturers regularly review the descriptions of study courses and supplement them with the latest literature, it has been observed that, e.g., the obligatory literature of some study courses in the ABSP 'Eastern European Cultural and Business Studies' contain sources which were published in the previous century; there is also quite a lot of literature in Russian, which assumes that all the students must know Russian (e.g., 'Ancient Eastern cultures in the modern world') or German (e.g., the study course 'Fundamentals of EU'). It should be the responsibility of the DU Study Quality Assessment Centre and other administrative units to ensure that study courses are assigned correct codes, e.g., the course 'Applied Business Ethics' has the code MākZ1529 in the arts, while 'Semiotics of Culture' – the code Vēst2020 in history, although the branch of science has been selected to be Linguistics and Literary Science, which seems to be the right choice, as the course deals with such branches of linguistics as syntax, pragmatics, and semantics. The 2-credit course 'Applied Business Ethics' contains 20 compulsory reading items, including some old sources and a source in Russian.

All internal regulations according to which students can submit complaints and proposals are publicly available on the DU website. Students have access to the faculty e-address to communicate any problems that might have arisen. They have the opportunity to submit complaints or proposals to the Study Quality Assurance Centre, the Council for the Studies, the Dean's office of the Faculty of Humanities, a respective structural unit or the director of study programmes. Students can also submit electronically an anonymous complaint and proposal on improving the quality of studies and the environment at DU Daugavpils University. This option is used rarely, as it was clarified during the on-site expert visit. A trust questionnaire has been created by the Student Council. Students receive a written reply to a written complaint. Students are informed about the opportunity to file a complaint or submit proposals when enrolled at DU, at the organizational meeting of the Faculty of Humanities, as well as during the meeting when information about the programmes is provided. During the onsite visit, the students confirmed that their proposals and complaints during the pandemic were handled, and DU Student Council's proposals have been supported.



DU uses the information system DUIS, which contains statistical data and information about study programmes, students and academic staff. One of the main tools for promoting the improvement of study fields is student surveys, i.e., for 1st year students - 2 months following the start of their studies, for other students - at the end of each academic year. If necessary, lecture observation and individual surveys of student groups, as well as discussions with lecturers on measures to improve the quality of studies are organized. The data obtained in the surveys are analyzed at different levels and described in the self-assessment report of the study field. DU organises graduate and employer surveys, which provide information on the employment trends of graduates, evaluation of the acquired study programmes and recommendations for their improvement and the development of the content of the study programmes. Systematically obtained data, their analysis at different levels and interpretation are used in the improvement of the study field. The provided examples in the SER prove that student and employer surveys are functional and recommendations are taken into account.

The information about the study programmes is published on the DU website and is available to students and applicants in the languages of implementation of the study programmes. The International and Public Relations Office is responsible for the compliance of the information on the study fields of DU available on the DU website with the information available in the official registers. The Council for Studies [sic.] is responsible for the regular and timely provision of information about students in the VIIS.

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

To conclude, DU has adopted the 'Internal Quality Assurance Policy of Studies at Daugavpils University', which is publicly available on the DU website. The policy is aimed at contributing to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes. The procedures for the development and review of the relevant study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms - in particular student, employer, and graduate surveys have been defined and are operational. The statistical data collection mechanism ensures regular collection and analysis of information on the study programmes corresponding to the study field.

#### **Strengths**

1. Internal quality assurance system of the study field is implemented according to the 'Internal Quality Assurance Policy of Studies at Daugavpils University'.
2. Student, employer, and graduate surveys as well as the involvement of employers and graduates in the Study Direction Council are key means to improve the quality of study courses, study programmes, and academic staff performance. It also allows coordination of the programme content with labour market demands.
3. Internal regulations that stipulate ways the students can submit complaints and proposals on improving the quality of studies and the environment at DU are explained to the students and are publicly available on the DU website.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. The internal quality assurance system does not always ensure efficient management of the relevant study field and study programmes, as there does not seem to be a clear link between the content of some programmes and the degree or qualification awarded.
2. The internal quality assurance system seems to have failed to ensure formal quality criteria of a number of study course descriptions.
3. The quality assurance system functioning needs improvement at all levels to avoid the provided

data inconsistencies of degree and international students or curriculum mapping.

4. The lack of apparent key performance indicators makes it hard to track the overall success of the implemented activities and the efficiency of DU goal achievement.

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

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

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

DU has established a quality management system in compliance with ISO 9001:2017 quality standard. The quality management system aims at ensuring continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field. The lack of apparent key performance indicators makes it hard to track overall success of implemented activities and how well DU goals are achieved.

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

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

DU has adopted the 'Internal Quality Assurance Policy of Studies at Daugavpils University', which is binding on students, academic staff and general staff of DU. It is publicly available on the DU website. DU Study Quality Assessment Centre controls and maintains a quality assurance system and, in collaboration with the DU management, the study field management, the Study Direction Council, the relevant faculties and departments, is responsible for ensuring the quality and management system of the study process. However, the system does not function effectively, as the experts have identified a number of deficiencies.

- 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:** Partially compliant

The mechanism of DU internal and external quality provision is existent. Externally, DU cooperates with the Ministry of Education and Science (e.g., distribution of State budget funded places, execution of conceptual decisions), Higher Education Council (e.g., dealing with strategic issues), Academic Information Centre (e.g., study direction and programme accreditation). Internally, DU has established a mechanism to develop, approve, supervise the performance and carry out the inspection of study programmes. However, the study field submitted for accreditation has some problems, which could have been handled if the mechanism had functioned well.

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

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

As seen from the SER, the information provided in the course descriptions, as well as the discussions with the academic staff and programme directors during the onsite visit, criteria and procedures for the evaluation of students' results have been developed and are known to the students.

- 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

DU developed internal regulatory enactments and mechanisms that regulate the qualification and quality assurance of academic staff (SER p. 45) according to the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. As seen from the SAR, elections to academic positions are held according to the requirements of the 'Regulation on electing to academic positions at Daugavpils University'. The announcement of the vacancies, recruitment, election procedures are open to persons with appropriate academic education and professional qualifications.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

DU 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 SER fails to provide information on the study funds available for the implementation of the sub-programmes with a small number of students. The lack of apparent key performance indicators makes it hard to track overall success of the implemented activities and how well DU goals are achieved.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The quality assurance system aims at ensuring continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field. However, its functioning needs improvement at all levels to avoid data inconsistencies of curriculum mapping, inclusion of study programmes in the study field which do not or partially comply with the formal requirements set for the study field 'Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes', and factual mistakes in the submitted documents for accreditation.

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

#### Analysis

According to the SER and the information provided during the experts visit in the DU the source of funding for the study direction 'Language and Culture Studies, Native Language Studies and Language Programmes' is the state budget funding for studies (grant) and tuition fee. The calculation of costs for one student in the study direction programmes has been done by the Department of Finance and Accounting of DU, including the salary fund and all other costs. The detailed information is provided in the annex '2.3.1.\_calculations of program costs.zip' The funds for the research are granted from the Ministry of Education and Science. The funds allocated for scientific development are obtained based on the scientific achievements and indicators of the lecturers for the previous year evaluated by the Council for Research of DU.

Lecturers of the study field have an opportunity to participate in the competition of research projects and receive funding, and they may also apply for the internal financing of WoS/ Scopus indexed publications at DU.

In the experts' opinion, the financial resources at DU disposal are sufficient for the efficient implementation of the study field.

DU has identified the necessary infrastructure resources, material and technical support necessary for the implementation of the study field and listed those in the SER (pp. 38-42).

The implementation of the programmes of the study field 'Language and Culture Studies, Native Language Studies and Language Programmes' takes place in the buildings of DU, which are located in Vienības Street 13, Parādes Street 1, and Parādes Street 1a.

The study process is provided with the material reproduction techniques, audio and video equipment, and visual presentation techniques. The library provides students and teaching staff with access to high-quality information corresponding to the field of study, offering the information resources in its collection for study and research purposes, as well as booking them from other libraries. DU library is open 9 hours a day, 45 hours a week.

In the experts' opinion, the students and the academic staff have access to the necessary resources. DU has developed a common procedure for obtaining new materials, supplementation of the library collection and subscription to databases at the request of faculty staff and study councils.

Applications for the purchase of books are regularly reviewed and approved by the Budget Committee of DU, thus implementing the mechanism for the purchase of the latest publications in the DU library. The library regularly informs the academic staff about the latest literature, database trials and subscription opportunities so that the academic staff and students can get acquainted with new offers (SER, p.40).

According to the SER (p.43) the information and communication technology solutions are widely used by DU. The study process is partly based on several principles of the e-learning environment, e.g., DU uses the e-learning environment (Moodle), thus providing direct communication (e-mail, consultations) and information in each study course. DU lecturers systematically use the e-learning environment Moodle (<https://estudijas.du.lv/>) and display various study materials there - materials for lectures, seminars, and practical classes, which support students' independent work.

Students and lecturers have constant access to the Internet, the Internet connection of the local DU network, the e-learning environment Moodle, as well as the opportunity to use e-mails and teleconferencing, various online platforms, such as ZOOM.

As a supplement to the e-learning environment Moodle, modern video equipment is available, which allows for creating educational, informative, and advertising video materials, as well as provides live webcasts of conferences. Video lectures are stored on the DU server and are available in the Moodle environment for each corresponding study course.

In the experts' opinion, the information and communication technology solutions used to ensure the study process are appropriate and effective for full time studies, distance studies and a hybrid form of studies.

Elections to academic positions are held according to the requirements of the 'Regulation on electing to academic positions at Daugavpils University'. Information about the academic vacancies is published on the DU website or the Official Publisher of the Republic of Latvia 'Latvijas Vēstnesis', thus providing an opportunity for any person interested in the position to apply for the job at DU. Both the citizens of the Republic of Latvia and foreign citizens whose academic education and professional qualifications meet the requirements of the fields of science or art, the study and the research at DU and who speak the state language and professional English may be elected to academic positions at DU (SER, p. 44). The announcement of the vacancies, recruitment, and election procedures are open.

DU has developed internal regulatory enactments and mechanisms that regulate the qualification and quality assurance of academic staff (SER p. 45) according to the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. The ESF project 'Strengthening the professional competence of the academic staff of Daugavpils University strategic specialization areas' (No. 8.2.2.0/18/A/022) is highly valued for meeting the professional needs and development of the academic staff. It gave an opportunity to improve their competence by participating in the courses 'Communication and Communication Skills', 'Leadership ABC', 'Leadership in the style of coaching', 'Communication', 'Emotional intelligence in education', 'Basics of developing e-learning materials and virtual learning platforms', 'Trends in the use of educational technologies 21 century', etc.

The academic staff development is also supported by 'ERASMUS+' programme and mobility. The DU can visit the foreign cooperation universities and participate in staff training, thus improving professional competencies, observing work at a foreign cooperation university or branch organization. Foreign mobility gives DU academic and administrative staff the opportunity to gain knowledge and specific skills by learning from the experience and good practice of foreign partners, as well as to improve the practical skills required for the work at DU.

The results and effectiveness of the implemented measures are listed in Table 3.2.6. (SER, p. 46), and they are adequate.

According to the information provided in SER (p. 48.-49), 51 lecturers have been involved, of which 43 have been elected to academic and scientific positions, 8 hold the positions of a visiting lecturer, a visiting assistant, and a visiting professor (Annex 2.3.7.). In the direction, there are 6 professors, 7 associate professors, 14 assistant professors (docents), 10 lecturers, 1 assistant, 2 researchers and 3 leading researchers. Full-time work in DU is calculated in the equivalent of hours, depending on the position. The workload of the professor and associate professor per year is 920 hours, the docent – 960, the lecturer – 980, the assistant – 1000. The number of contact hours is large. Only a part of the academic staff works full-time, some lecturers have 0.6-0.9 loads. The workload includes only academic work, scientific work does not fit into it. Researchers and leading researchers have been elected to institutes, and 500 hours are counted for doing scientific work in their workload, academic hours are added. Visiting lecturers work based on a company contract, where the number of hours is noted. The teaching staff, who combine academic work with administrative work (Dean, Vice-Dean), have been employed full-time in the administrative position and for 0.5 workload in the academic position, which creates the overload of academic staff and disproportioned distribution of workloads. The balance of the teaching staff workload should be improved.

DU infrastructure has been modernized and adapted to improve the accessibility of the environment for people with disabilities (movement, vision, hearing impairment), as well as there have been opened children's rooms for students, who are young parents. The students can use DU in various ways: computer classes and auditoriums – for consultations, meetings, library premises – for literature analysis, preparation of independent and research work, as well as specially equipped premises – for conferences, study, and extracurricular activities (DU Sports Complex).

DU offers a wide range of support for their students regarding studies, career, and psychological support as well as support for the students with special needs and young parents. Psychological support derives from the principles of a student-centered system. By supporting internship opportunities, DU helps students to meet with potential employers.

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

The financial resources at DU disposal are sufficient for the implementation of the study field. The resources and provisions for financing the study field and the research activities are transparent and

efficient. DU has identified the necessary resources and infrastructure for the study field, and they are available for the students and teaching staff. Library resources and databases are available to students and meet the needs of the study field, and there is a system for improvement and purchase of resources. DU has a transparent system for attracting and hiring new academic staff members. There is a system for ensuring staff development and didactic and professional improvements using ESF funding and mobility projects. DU offers wide range of support for their students.

#### Strengths

1. Infrastructure of DU is appropriate for study field.
2. The financial resources at DU disposal are sufficient for the implementation of the study field.
3. Strong support system for students with different needs.

#### Weaknesses

1. Workload for academic staff is unbalanced.
2. The funding from international scientific programs is not sufficient at the moment; teaching staff's research is funded from University's internal resources.
3. There is a complicated bureaucratic procedure for purchasing new books for study courses.

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

#### **Analysis**

DU in its medium-term goals determined by the University strategy highlights the importance of developing scientific and creative work on an international level, deepening integration of scientific research in the study process, facilitating technology transfer and development of innovations, and contributing to public understanding of the science (SER, p. 7). The defined directions of scientific research in the field under analysis are in line with the University strategy where special emphasis is put on the importance and role of the preparation of language, literature and cultural studies specialists for the development of the region and the country, as well as the coordination of the scientific research direction with the implementation of the academic programme (SER, p.16). The impact on society is visible through the objectives of the study field which are related to ensuring the sustainable development of the Republic of Latvia by increasing the development potential of the country, creating and maintaining informative educational material and technical provision, creating new knowledge and innovations. The study field also plays an important role in promoting the socio-economic development of a less attractive territory of Latvia, creating conditions for increasing sustainability and competitiveness of both the region and the entire country.

The international scientific accreditation of the scientific direction of the Faculty of Humanities of DU received evaluation 4 (in the scale of 5) in 2020. Academic publications indexed in Scopus or Clarivate Analytics WoS by faculty members are presented in Tables 2.4.4.1. and 2.4.4.2 in the SER. Although academic staff in the direction have produced 662 publications during the assessment period, only 29% of them are in Scopus or WoS indexed editions (the number of such publications in conference proceedings is high), some of them do not fall under the evaluated study field. Scientific monographs were also published in the period under evaluation (4 in 2017, 5 in 2018, and 2 in 2020, Annex 2.4.4). Generally, there is a thematic compliance of the topics of the publications with the courses delivered by the academic staff members. The research activities are good on the national level (participation in national scientific projects funded by the Latvian Council of Science, the Ministry of Education and Science); however, the scientific participation at international level should be increased. In SER (p.55), it is mentioned that the funding for scientific activities is received from the CFR, NPC, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the EU-cross-border cooperation programs. It is

important to mention that these particular programs are not primarily dedicated to the development of scientific activities, projects, or publications. In Table 2.4.2, the mentioned centers act as centers of scientific activity; nevertheless, their involvement in science is not revealed in the SER from the perspective of submission of scientific projects, attracting the funding for scientific projects, etc.

International cooperation in the SER is presented through collaboration examples in various projects (p.53). Annex 2.5.2. provides the list of universities with whom the study field cooperated in the assessment period. The data provided in this annex is of a very general origin and vague (e.g., participation in scientific conferences, preparation of publications for scientific publications, joint cooperation projects) and do not give specific information on the joined scientific activities. Moreover, the international cooperation (SER, p.53) seems to be quite fragmented and linked to short-term projects. International collaboration on a continuous basis could be one of the factors that might serve as a positive agent for the development of long-term international scientific activities. Although the cooperation with social partners is at a good level, the researchers in the study field could cooperate with universities and companies at the national and international levels. Research cooperation with external partners might take various forms: implementation of joint research projects, participation in implementation of outsourced research by external partners, providing consultations, etc.

The mechanisms for the participation of academic staff in scientific research is present in the University. Members of academic staff have the possibility to present their scientific achievements for financial remuneration on an early basis. At the same time, within the DU procedure for evaluation of scientific activity of academic staff, the scientific activity of lecturers is promoted by receiving funding for the promotion and support of further scientific activity.

As stated in the SER (p. 57), the participation of doctoral degree students in the scientific research is presented in details. The students of the study programmes under evaluation are involved in the preparatory activities of international scientific conferences of DU, thus gaining the necessary skills in the organizational process of a scientific conference, summer schools, or other science communication activities. Detailed data on the participation and presentation of the research findings of BA or MA students in scientific conferences are not provided in the SER. During the expert visit it was confirmed that BA and MA students are involved in the organisational matters of conferences. Generally, there is little consistency in the development of research competence and encouragement of BA and MA students' participation in the research area.

Innovative solutions, such as thematic integration courses for third-country nationals, summer camps for Latvian and diaspora children, intercultural competence training courses, Latvian language, and Latvian cultural courses for foreigners developed as a result of the program of the Latvian Studies Centre, have a high impact on society and region. The creation of tourist routes with the help of electronic tools is an excellent example of a contribution to the development of tourism clusters in the region. As for the examples of innovative solutions that are applied in the study field and have a significant positive impact on the study process, detailed information on how the innovative solution impacts the study process is not available.

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

DU has created a mechanism to encourage the participation of teaching staff in scientific research. Although the number of scientific articles published in the period under evaluation is outstanding, the number of publications indexed in Scopus/ WoS accounts for only 29%. Scientific research has integration links with the study process in the BA and MA level programmes. However, academic staff funding is mostly dependent on teaching hours and not on research outcomes. The research

excellence of the faculty can be improved. The lecturers who do not publish in international journals with impact factor should verify their research level and, if needed, increase it to the internationally compared level.

#### Strengths

1. The contribution of the study field 'Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies and Language Programmes' to the sustainable development of the Latgale region is beyond doubt.
2. Numerous scientific activities (conferences, publishing collections of scientific articles) have a tracked national and limited international record throughout the years.

#### Weaknesses

1. The focus of the publication efforts could be shifted towards more prestigious and well-known international journals and publishing houses.
2. Research opportunities embedded in cooperation with social partners could be more exploited, in both research conducted by academic staff and the final theses produced by students.
3. International cooperation in the field of scientific research within the study direction is limited and should be broadened involving more international partners, joining the existing consortiums of universities, thus, creating opportunities to participate in the development of research proposals to be submitted to international programs.
4. In house publishing is not covered by various indexing services (e.g., SCOPUS) with international visibility.
5. Active participation of the student in research activities lacks student scientific conferences, preparation of publications, presenting their research in national and international conferences, and scientific internships funded by the Latvia Research Council.
6. Innovative solutions that are applied in the study field and have a significant positive impact on the study process do not continuously include bringing innovations and inventions to the content of the course; the majority of sources analyzed in the courses should not be older than 5 years; Professors should present their latest articles to students, to name a few.

### Assessment of the requirement [2]

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

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

The DU and the study field management have developed mechanisms and tools for the participation of teaching staff in scientific research. Scientific research and the results thereof have integration links with the study programmes. The research excellence of the faculty can be improved. The teaching load needs to be considerably reduced to allow for time and energy for research.

### 1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

#### Analysis

DU acknowledges the importance of successful cooperation with employers, higher education institutions (HEIs), and municipalities in Latvia as a key factor for the effective functioning and development of the study direction and the study programmes (SER p.58), e.g. SIA LatInSoft, cultural associations, the Culture Department of Daugavpils, The University of Latvia, Liepaja University, Rezekne Academy of Technologies, Ventspils University College, the Board of the American Latvian Association's Culture Foundation, the Holocaust Centre for Remembrance and



Cooperation with employers is manifold. The SER outlines the role of employer surveys regularly conducted for course development, so the latter would adequately cater for the demands of the labour market (SER p.58). For the same purpose, employers are included in the work of the Council for Studies. This inclusion has led to demonstrable developmental course programme content decisions (SER p. 58 – 59). Their role as a provider of feedback on meeting the programme goals is manifested in involving them in the work of State Examination Commissions. They initiate projects and provide internships aimed at meeting the programme instructional goals. Although the cooperation with employers appears to be versatile and have a long tradition, a more systematic overview of how each programme uses employer cooperation for the attainment of study goals, with concrete examples, could have been provided in this section of the SER. In the current format, the examples seem to be random, failing to demonstrate the employer's role in full. The essence of cooperation with municipalities has been much less clearly discussed, limited only to the declaration that 'activities of the direction are supported by the city and parish municipalities' and that they 'emphasize the role of direction in the development of the region' (SER p. 59). Although extensive cooperation here has been deemed necessary, the general examples of the forms of this cooperation have been given. Cooperation between DU and municipalities and HEIs is mostly based on mutual agreements and has not been sufficiently documented. Annex 2.5.1. provides a few more details, but they do little to further clarify the essence of cooperation with municipalities regarding assessed study field.

Cooperation with HEIs in Latvia generally is organized in the form of joint articles and projects as well as conference participation. Six Latvian HEIs have been highlighted as DU cooperation partners in the respective study direction. There seems to be a strong bias towards cooperation in the field of linguistics and literary studies in various languages, with regional studies and intercultural communication being less represented (Table 2.5.1). Table 2.5.1. in the SER and the respective Annex differ in terms of the type of cooperation specified. General remark, not related to the assessment, that a more substantiated, systematic account of cooperation could have been provided with lists of articles published and projects as well as conferences organized with respect to each programme. It is clear that cooperation takes place, the essence of the cooperation has been substantiated by concrete examples, but still is difficult to assess to what extent the cooperation contributes to the study goal and learning outcome achievement. The study direction would profit from a more comprehensive cooperation account and strategic planning.

Cooperation with different institutions abroad, especially higher education establishments, is extensive as can be seen from the list of partners in Annex 2.5.2. The use of the term 'high schools', however, in the respective section of the SER (p. 61) is misleading and distracting and not applicable to denote universities or colleges. The forms of cooperation are versatile, ranging from conference participation, writing joint articles, mobility projects to joint panels, etc. The extent of foreign cooperation is well demonstrated here, it would have been more informative, if the institutions listed had been connected to particular study programmes, topics of projects, etc. A list of employers, municipality, research institute cooperation partners has also been provided, as the respective cooperation is also claimed to be many-sided (SER p.61). The respective section of the SER has outlined both the principle (relatedness to the study field) as well as concrete mechanism of international partner recruitment: research contacts of the faculty, international projects, guest lecturer involvement, contacts through student exchange.

The SER report adequately summarises the existing mechanisms of attracting students and faculty from abroad. There is a detailed description of the principles followed by the study direction in

section 2.5.2 on page 62. The means of attracting teaching staff and students are implemented through Erasmus +, international projects, conferences, joint publications, research contacts of the teaching staff.

The annexes attached show a noticeable decline in the numbers of both incoming and outgoing Erasmus students, although there has been a noticeable increase in the number of incoming Erasmus students in the current academic year. Annex 2.5.3 gives a full list of student and staff mobility participants. The respective data for the incoming faculty show a declining tendency, while the outgoing Erasmus mobility, while low during the Covid period, is admirably high. The SER does not report any concerns related to student or faculty mobility. It would have been useful to indicate if there have been any problems related to the teaching quality, the teaching content covered, timetabling, grade transfer, assessment, etc.

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

DU acknowledges the importance of successful cooperation with employers, higher education institutions (HEIs), municipalities in Latvia as a key factor for the effective functioning and development of the study direction and the study programmes. This cooperation is claimed to be manifold, but could have been made more transparent for stakeholders. Mechanisms of attracting students and faculty to DU are in place, the problems related to student- and faculty-related mobility have not been addressed in the report. Overall, the experts indicate, that the DU study field documents and interview results testifies to an adequate level of cooperation and internationalization.

#### **Strengths**

1. Close cooperation has been documented with particular organisations/ employees and numerous HEIs.
2. The employers value the cooperation with the study direction. There are long-standing partnerships which are mutually beneficial on many levels.
3. Clear principles exist and examples have been given for international cooperation.
4. The network of international partners is dense involving numerous HEIs in different parts of the world.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. Cooperation between DU and municipalities and HEIs in Latvia has not a fully principled approach to managing cooperation, has not been sufficiently documented, mostly based on mutual agreements.
2. The cooperation ties are not transparent, i.e., there is no clear indication as to which programme of the direction the cooperation refers to.
3. Although the number of outgoing mobility is admirably high, the benefit of the mobility has not been specified in the report, i.e., which programme outcomes have been met through the mobility.

### **Assessment of the requirement [3]**

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

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

The university acknowledges the importance of cooperation and internationalisation as a key factor of its effective functioning. Concrete mechanisms for attracting students and faculty mobility as well as cooperation between DU and its partners exist (although could be more

clearly specified/exemplified). Overall, the experts indicate, that the DU study field documents and interview results testifies to an adequate level of cooperation and internationalization.

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

### **Analysis**

Recommendations of experts given in the previous accreditation of the study field during the previous assessment period and the DU comments about implementation provided in SER and Annex 2.6.1.Eksperts\_recommendations.pdf. There are summarized in the following 25 points:

1. 'The team observed the need to further deregulate the study programmes. In particular, the so called 'C courses' should be based on a much larger variety of courses for free choice by the students, making full use of the offers the university has in this respect.'

As stated by DU, C-part (free choice courses) is being restructured with a wider inter-faculty choice. It must be noted that the PMSP 'Intercultural Relations' and the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' do not have a clearly defined B or C study parts, general elective courses study part. Other study programmes which have C courses limited to a narrow list of available courses – therefore resembling functionally and in a regulatory sense – limited elective courses (B courses) instead of free electives. Therefore, this recommendation was taken into account, but considered as partially completed, has to be continued to fulfill.

2. 'Review the study programme management structures and simplify, in particular for the philology programmes (bachelor and master)'.

At present, there are no identifiable issues or indications for potential problems with study programme management structures, yet there are some terminology inconsistencies regarding study field management in the SER, which could lead to misunderstanding or misinterpretation of responsibilities. However, it can be concluded that the recommendation stands as fully completed.

3. 'We recommend to review and change the current resource allocation for 'teacher' for research. The number of contact hours should be drastically decreased for all teaching positions. All academic staff members ('teachers') should have enough time for research. Ensure clear understanding among staff members about resource allocation.'

The teaching staff contact hours for study courses comply with requirements. As provided by DU, the workload is still high, but mechanisms for delegating the researcher's workload and promotion the motivation of the academic staff in research work was improved. Teaching staff does have disproportionately high and fragmented workload allocation for contact hours due to regional specific and teaching staff availability. The recommendation is considered as processed to be fully completed, but this issue is identified by the current experts' panel as well.

4. 'Review current distribution of funding for research at university level. Furthermore, recommend to raise the budget per travel for PhD students to go also to other conferences, not only in the near neighbouring countries.'

This recommendation does not apply to the study field, as there is no PhD programme submitted for evaluation. Yet, for the record, DU has indicated that PhD students are eligible to financial support in the framework of SAM 8.2.2 funding. There have been no other actions taken regarding this recommendation by DU, but the expert panel has not investigated this issue further. The recommendation can be considered as fully completed.

5. 'The university should waive the fees for DU students attending its own conferences'.

DU has indicated that this issue has been solved. Participation fee for students in DU conferences has been waived since 2020. The recommendation has been fully completed.

6. 'Increase the budget for scientific literature (books & journals)' The available scientific literature in the library is sufficient. Overall, study material availability is in good standing. DU has indicated that there is annual funding and grant, and project funding is often redirected to library and study materials. In the experts' opinion, the recommendation has been fully completed.

7. 'Encourage staff members to aim for higher quality journals, as even rejections from these would come with high quality peer feedback on their work. Seek out for intellectual exchange with colleagues from abroad, avoid conferences based on a business model instead of genuine scientific exchange.'

As indicated in the SER 2.4.4., DU produced 662 publications during the assessment period of which 203 are indexed in Scopus or Web of Science. Compared with previous accreditation the publication numbers increased. The annual number of indexed publication is relatively stable (2016 – 34; 2017 – 37; 2018 – 21; 2019 – 21; 2020 – 28; 2021 – 31), but the total number of indexed publications over time shows that there is no noticeable improvement. Therefore, it is questionable if the actions taken by DU during this assessment period were really effective. Compared to the previous accreditation situation, the recommendation can be considered as completed, as the requirement to level up overall research output quality still stands, the issue in the current situation is actual and require to continue to improve.

8. 'Consolidate information on available literature and other sources from the different libraries (main library, department libraries, centres, etc.)'

DU states that the inclusion of other resources like departmental libraries in the general catalogue of DU is systematically continued. The recommendation has been fulfilled.

9. 'Ensure sockets in the reading room of the library for students own devices, install reading lamps.'

During the expert visit to the premises of DU, the impression was that the library is in good standing and sufficiently geared towards an efficient study process. DU notes that renovation works took place during the assessment period. The recommendation can be considered as completed.

10. 'We recommend that the university give more autonomy to the faculty in managing its budget and making its internal decisions, as we found DU FH staff very knowledgeable and capable of more self-managements.'

The expert panel has not seen any indications of problems or, on the other hand – potential opportunities or benefits that could arise from reconsidering the autonomy of the faculty. DU indicates that this recommendation has not been acted on. However, in the experts' opinion, the recommendation can be considered as fulfilled.

11. For the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' and the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' programmes, the expert panel sees a clear need to freshen up course content, as it is in large parts still very much anchored in the paradigm of structuralism.

The ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' and the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' have been renewed and improved in a good way – a module system has been introduced and new study courses have been developed. The recommendation can be considered fully implemented.

12. Ensure provision of up-to-date basic research skills for students, starting at an early stage: in particular, introduction on how to search for literature, to use databases etc. – this could be offered from the library (not workarounds like google books preview, trials for databases etc.), but even

more: technologies for referencing.

A new study course has been developed – ‘Practical aspects of research’ for the ABSP ‘Language and Culture Studies’. The aim of the study course is ‘[...] to introduce the practical aspects of the development of scientific work (application of appropriate methodological approaches, selection of empirical material, empirical research and analysis, work with sources, etc.), basic principles of research development.’ The recommendation can be considered as completed.

13. ‘A regular and thorough revision of key sources on the reading lists is recommended for all 19 programmes, in order to be up-to-date with the latest theories and research, and to ensure financial means for a sufficient number of hard copies in the library.’

The recommendation related to the all 19 study programmes, not only for assessed study field. Despite the fact that there are some indications for the general quality assurance (QA) policy on verifying the availability of study material and its status within the study course description, for study field and included study programmes the procedures for the revision of study course descriptions (on the matter of availability and the recency of sources and materials) is provided. The recommendation has been fully completed, as the actions are still needed for realising on a regular basis.

14. Explore opportunities to further incorporate practical elements into the academic programmes, also if not required. This can cover reflection on applying linguistic research in practice - as this is already the case with the bachelor programmes ‘Eastern European Culture and Business Relations’, ‘Latvian philology’ and ‘Russian philology’: We think that similar activities would be of high value to enhance the programmes in the academic bachelor subprogramme ‘English philology’, as well as in the academic master programme ‘Philology’.

There have been changes made regarding these study programmes; for example, there are modules including courses on project development in the field of the humanities. In addition, there is an ‘Academic Internship’ course introduced in the amount of 1 CP (1.5 ECTS). The question on the role of this course within the broader concept of the study programme remains. However, the recommendation can be considered as completed.

15. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment should be taken into account when designing and assessing language courses. See [www.coe.int/lang-CEFR](http://www.coe.int/lang-CEFR).

This recommendation is not particularly clear. If this recommendation implies that course outcomes should include CEFR descriptors, then it must be noted that language courses in tertiary level programmes are more nuanced than the definitions provided by CEFR; therefore, on the current expert panel view, they are not necessary in course descriptions. The recommendation can be considered as completed.

16. ‘Introduced more flexible admission rules for the master’s study programme ‘Philology’, at least in the way as it is for ‘Comparative Philology’, or even like for the master’s programme ‘Intercultural Relations’.’

According to the DU webpage and the submitted documents for the accreditation, the admission requirements for the master’s study programme ‘Philology and language practices’ bachelor's degree in Latvian, English or Russian philology or language studies, or second level professional higher education (first-cycle professional higher education) in the field of Latvian, English or Russian philology. The admission rules are compatible and justified in the context of the study programme. The recommendation has been completed.

17. ‘Rules to recognize courses from studies abroad should be less restrictive. In particular, students

should have the choice to use credits from course work from studies abroad back at DU, and not only in the case that these are clearly matching with (the very limited list) of C courses.'

Student outgoing mobility is at a relatively good level, and there were no indications that the recognition of study courses could be an issue. DU has the necessary documentation defining procedures for the recognition of study courses; therefore, the recommendation can be considered completed.

18. 'We recommend regular staff development offers in HE didactics. This could be done in small rounds with colleagues, for example as the case with the upcoming workshop on distance learning provided by the current Fulbright guest lecturer. Or to think of something like an inspiration day in the semester for staff to get ideas, exchange on teaching practice. It might be advisable to introduce an internal annual staff appraisal scheme in order to assess lecturers' needs and achievements.'

DU claims that 'good practice exchange seminars are regularly organized in the HF departments and the faculty in general, where topicalities in teaching methodology are identified and discussed, for example, the use of e-resources, the latest trends in methodology, project development opportunities, etc.' However, there is no sufficient evidence that this is the case apart from occasional cases. Nevertheless, the experts' panel concludes that there might be other ways how staff competencies can be developed and should be left up to the decision of the institution. The recommendation can be considered as completed, it is advisable to pay more attention to the raised issue.

19. 'Explore innovative methods of teaching, for example, the flipped classroom model, in which typical lecture and homework elements are reversed.'

The implementation of innovative teaching methods is organised on the initiative of teaching staff and students. There is no systematic approach or policy regarding widespread exploration of different teaching methods, but during the Covid-19 restrictions several innovative teaching methods were approved and implemented. It can be considered as the recommendation is fully completed.

20. 'Consider an introduction, where appropriate, of more formative assessment and fewer summative assessment tasks, as well as some peer assessment.'

This recommendation is closely related with general QA issues and other recommendations and issues analysed elsewhere in this joint report. Approaches to assessment of achievements of students vary from course to course and adjusted to the goals, tasks and results of study courses and study programmes. As this question is analysed in other parts of the JO in the context of the compliance with criteria, this recommendation can be considered as fully completed.

21. 'Make use of available technologies for more efficient communication between teacher and students, as well as the use of available resources for teaching and learning (content-wise). The Faculty of Humanities has a lot of good resources - ensuring the development of related skills among staff.'

COVID mandated distance learning has allowed staff members to be more acquainted with technologies. Since 2020, DU has a grant that supports the development of study courses in the MOODLE environment, yet it is not all-encompassing as of now and proceed. The experts' panel acknowledges the progress made so far, the recommendation has been completed, there is the room for improvement for further development of the e-learning environment given the recent trends in the implementation of these tools.

22. 'Sharing teaching practice as peer observation might be a good format for further improving the

quality of teaching: We feel that a formal and regular peer observation system would contribute to the practice of sharing the best teaching, assessment, and research developments between the different departments of the faculty.'

Accepted as general recommendation for improvement. There should be a way how good teaching practices are being shared between staff members on a regular basis. The experts' panel understands that there could be other ways how teaching practice can be shared. It is recommended to pay close additional attention to this issue in context of all DU.

23. 'Process of assessment and feedback: A transparent assessment system (including transparent assessment criteria) should be written and available for students (online and in other forms). Formal written feedback ensuring objectivity, should be also provided for students.'

General criteria are explained in course descriptions. If a student feels that assessment is not objective, it should be addressed by the procedures defined within the quality assurance system. However, there is room for improvement regarding feedback collection and establishing quality culture for continuous study improvement. Nevertheless, the recommendation can be considered as fulfilled as far as the criteria of the implementation of the previous recommendation goes.

24. 'To ensure a formal follow-up process on students' feedback, we recommend an implementation of a Staff/Student Liaison Committee which would meet once per semester to discuss any matters arising from students' feedback' There is a lack of evidence for a continuous follow-up process on students' feedback. DU should continue to explore alternative ways (apart from questionnaires and surveys) on gathering data from students.

Also, there is in DU closing-the-feedback loop regarding student feedback, during the visit provided the evidence for continuous action following student input or communication with students about the results, analysis, conclusions and decisions taken on the collected feedback data. As there is room for improvement, the recommendation is considered as completed, yet it must be acknowledged that there can be other ways how the goal of this recommendation can be achieved apart from the suggested way.

25. 'Make use of the British Council.'

As stated in SER and Annexes and convinced by experts, the faculty has good contacts and cooperation with representative offices and embassies of various countries. The recommendation can be considered as completed within the context of the criteria of the implementation of the previous recommendations, as this recommendation is overly specific.

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

DU provided the general approach towards recommendation implementation regarding the assessment period. There are still continuing issues in relation to research activities, QA issues and working towards ensuring the best possible way to achieve study results. However, there are positive achievements regarding overhaul of both the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' and the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' programmes.

Allmost all recommendations of experts given in the previous accreditation of the study field during the previous assessment period were taken into account and are considered as completed. Some recommendations from the previous assessment are in process and recommended to continue on a regular basis.

#### **Strengths**

1. The implementation of the module system and new content in the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' and the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' is commendable.

2. Library and material availability is updated and in good standing.
3. Sufficiently consistent and continuous exchange of good teaching practices and innovative teaching methods.

#### Weaknesses

1. There are still actual issues regarding limited elective courses (B-part courses) and free elective (C-part courses) .
2. Teaching workload and research are still not fully balanced.
3. Research efforts could be more geared towards high-prestige and international recognisability.

### Assessment of the requirement [4]

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

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

Allmost all recommendations of experts given in the previous accreditation of the study field during the previous assessment period were taken into account and are considered as completed. Some recommendations from the previous assessment are in process and recommended to continue on a regular basis.

### 1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

#### Short-term recommendations

The study direction development plan has to envisage quantitative indicators and persons responsible for the implementation of the plan.

For the ABSP 'Eastern European Cultural and Business Relations' to comply with the study field 'Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes' the learning outcomes as well as the mandatory and the restrictive elective courses of the programme have to comprise the fundamentals, principles, methodology, history and topical problems of the relevant branch of science in the humanities. Thus, the programme has to focus on language acquisition and the study of related cultures, literature, linguistics and phonetics as envisaged by the code of the study programme (227) in accordance with the Latvian Education Classification and the awarded degree: 'Bachelor's Degree of Humanities in Language Studies and Programs'.

The PMSP 'Intercultural Relations' has to be referred to another study field in the social sciences due to the degree to be awarded: 'Professional Master's Degree in Intercultural Relations', the qualification to be obtained: 'Strategic Communications Manager' and the learning outcomes of the study programme.

Cooperation with other Latvian HEIs and internationalization overall in the study fields pertaining to the regional studies and intercultural communication should be continuously maintained .

The lack of apparent key performance indicators makes it hard to track the efficiency of the study field goal achievement. The quality assurance system functioning needs improvement at all levels to avoid the inclusion of unrelated or partially related study programmes in the study field, inconsistencies of curriculum mapping, ensuring formal quality criteria of a number of study course descriptions and monitoring research progress.



All the study programmes have been submitted for accreditation as full time study programmes, therefore, remote study and/ or hybrid forms should not be considered as a regularity.

### Long-term recommendations

The number of research papers published in English should be increased.

The expert panel recommends that the University takes appropriate steps to create the possibility for staff research sabbaticals.

Renewal of academic staff who are as enthusiastic as the teaching staff working in the study programmes in the field should be part of a long-term process based on sound academic planning.

The principles of organizing and managing cooperation with DU partners in Latvia should be outlined.

Faculty mobility should be link clearly to programme goal attainment.

## II - "Language and Culture Studies" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Language and Culture Studies" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

The ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' (programme code - 43226) complies with the study field. It is a three-year full-time programme, implemented in Latvian and English at the University of Daugavpils, Daugavpils, Vienības iela 13, LV-5401. The degree to be awarded "Bachelor of Humanities in Literature and Linguistics" has no reference to culture, which is a key word in the name of the programme. A clearer connection between the name of the programme and the given degree could be established.

Although Latvian and English are claimed to be the languages of instruction, in the SER, it is mentioned that Russian is used as a language of instruction in the sub-programme 'Russian Studies' (see 3.1.4 of the SER) - "Russian Studies I" the language of instruction is Russian, but "Russian Studies II" - in Russian with English in the initial stages of language acquisition. The use of the Russian language as a language of instruction in the sub-programme seems to be reasonable considering the aim, objectives and learning outcomes of the sub-programme. In addition, it is mentioned in the SER (3.2.1) that "Russian Studies I" is for students whose knowledge of the Russian language at the beginning of their studies corresponds to B2-C1 level knowledge. Applicants holding a document certifying one's secondary education are admitted to the studies, based on the results of the centralised examinations. The ADMISSION REGULATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS APPLYING TO FULL-TIME STUDIES IN 2022 state that a language proficiency certificate issued during the last 5 years by the internationally recognized testing language institution confirming the knowledge of the language required for the study programme of B2 level minimum. The admission requirements in the sample diploma supplement state "Secondary education. English language skills at least B2 level (for studies in English). There does not seem to be information available in the SER and Annexes about the knowledge of the Russian language as a requirement for the admission to the "Russian Studies " sub-programme.

The duration and the scope of the study programme implementation, as well as the implementation

languages, are reasonable and justified. The scope of the programme covers the required programme parts complying with the state standards. However, it has to be noted that free elective courses if written in the study plan function as restricted electives, so they are to be deleted from the study plan. The aims, objectives, learning outcomes of the programme as well as sub-programmes are interrelated and consistent (see section 3.2 of the SER), and so are the admission requirements apart from the ones in the sub-programme Russian Studies (see the paragraph above). Admission requirements for study programmes for the next academic year are announced by November 1 of the current year on DU website [www.du.lv](http://www.du.lv).

It has to be noted that the diploma supplement sample (Appendix 3.1.2.) has a misprint in the Latvian language 'Humanitāro zinātņu bakalaura grāds literatūrā un lingvistikā ar specializāciju specializāciju anglistikas studijās'. Likewise, the word 'commission' in the sample bachelor's diploma has been misspelt.

The social justification of the study programme has been provided. The surveys organized prove that the graduates of the sub-programme 'English Philology' (the previous name of the sub-programme) are employed in the field of philology, related to philology, as well as not related to philology in Latvia and abroad. A large percentage of the graduates continue their studies in the academic and professional MSP at DU as well as other universities in Latvia and abroad. In the report and during the on-site interviews with the employers, the employment and internship opportunities offered by the company 'LatInSoft' have been stressed. The least information has been provided about the graduates of the sub-programme 'Latvian Studies'.

Despite the fact that statistics on student admissions also include students of the Erasmus+ mobility programme enrolled for one semester (the fact being disturbing because their number has not been stated), the statistical data indicate a decline in the number of students in the programme as well as the subprogrammes. The largest number of students - 113, out of which 64 - English Philology, 9 - Latvian Philology, and 40 - Russian Philology was enrolled in the year 2017/2018, whereas the smallest - 60, out of which 37- English Philology, 7 - Latvian Philology, 16 - Russian Philology in the year 2021/2022. The number of graduates in 2020, which can be considered as a year of graduation of the students enrolled in the study year 2017/2018, was 43 students (24 - English Philology, 7 - Latvian Philology, and 12 - Russian Philology). According to the available information in the Annex, in the reporting period, there have been 4 domestic fee paying students in the sub-programme English Philology. In total, there are 131 state-funded places available in the programme. The dropout rate is claimed to be 13-16% in the reporting period. The small graduate numbers, especially in the sub-programme Latvian philology, are alarming since the role of programme graduates in society and the labour market in the Latgale region is important.

In section 3.1.4. of the SER, it is mentioned that the number of students (academic years 2016/2017 - 2019/2020) in the programme was stable - on average 200 students in all-subprogrammes together. It would be logical to consider a three-year period, i.e. 2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019 rather than a four-year period. Comparing this information with the Annex, then the number is slightly above 109 (cf. Table "Number of Students by Funding Sources, as it seems to give the most reliable information. The website of DU does not inform the applicants about the tuition fee.

3.3. Section of the SER state that the minimal number of students in the study programme to ensure its profitability is 100 people (in three years of studies) for the students in Latvian and the respective language of the sub-programme (English, Latvian, or Russian) , and 10 people - for studies in English. If the latter number refers to a three-year period, it means that there is enough funding available even if there are 3 students each year. During the onsite visit, it was confirmed that the

study process is ensured .

The corrections made to the study programme's parameters within the assessment of the study field are analysed, justified and are supported.

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

To conclude, the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' complies with the study field. The aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and consistent. The duration and the scope of the study programme implementation, as well as the implementation languages, i.e., Latvian and English, are reasonable and justified. The study programme is socially justified. There is a decline in the number of students in all sub-programmes due to reasons not connected with the study programme as such.

#### **Strengths**

1. The aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' comply with the needs of society, especially in the Latgale region.
2. A large percentage of the graduates of the sub-programme majoring in English are employed in the relevant or related fields or continue their studies in the academic and professional MSP at DU as well as other universities in Latvia and abroad.
3. The sub-programme majoring in Russian studies has large employment and internship opportunities in the Latgale region.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. There is a decline in the admission and graduate numbers of students in the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies'.
2. Although being used as a language of instruction in the sub-programme 'Russian Studies', Russian has not been indicated as a language of instruction in the section 'parameters' of the accreditation documents.
3. There is no information available about the Russian language knowledge in the admission requirements of the sub-programme "Russian Studies".
4. A clearer connection between the name of the programme "Language and Culture Studies" and the given degree "Bachelor of Humanities in Literature and Linguistics" should be established.

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

### **Analysis**

The study programme for Language and Culture has been designed to achieve the qualification of Bachelor of Arts in Humanities in Literature and Linguistics (cf. diploma supplement). The programme has 4 aligned sub-programmes (English Studies, Latvian Studies, Russian Studies I and Russian Studies II. The inclusion of 2 sub-programmes that focus on Russian studies reflects the regional peculiarities of the DU location as well as its aspiration to cater for the need to the said regional studies in the EU border area.

It is notable that the name of the qualification given has no reference to culture, being restricted to literature and linguistics. A clearer connection between the essence of the course and the given qualification could be established. Annex 3.2.1 demonstrates that the programme includes all necessary parts: the mandatory part (not less than 50 credits) - 81, a restricted elective part (not less than 20 credits) - 33, and the part of free elective courses - 6CP. The requirements set for the

fundamentals, principles, structure and methodology of the relevant field or sub-field of science (not less than 25 credits), the history and current issues of the development of the field or sub-field of science (not less than 10 credits), as well as the characteristics and issues of the field or sub-field of science in an interdisciplinary aspect (not less than 15 credits) have been adequately met (cf.

Table two of the above appendix). A clear rationale has been offered for the division of the curriculum into modules, although the terminology used to the different subject groups could be more transparent, e.g., instead of the fairly classification suggested on pp. 132 - 134 of the SER, a more traditional division into core, major, minor and elective subjects would have increased the transparency of the system. Nevertheless, the proposed programme is comprehensive and incorporates a wide variety of subjects which aim to meet knowledge, skill and competency outcomes that have been aligned for all the proposed sub-programmes.

The SER gives a detailed description of the organization of studies on pages 131 – 140, 142 – 143 as well as annex 3.2.1. mapping of the courses. Indeed, a noticeable amount of alignment has been attempted within the programme to maintain sub-programme comparability/ similarity, see for example Annex 3.2.1 (Mandatory courses of the field in sub programmes). It is notable that the mandatory sub-programme specialization module for Russian II is exclusively made up of different level language courses with just one theoretical course offered (Russian cultural studies and literature. This shifts the emphasis of the sub-programme to language school rather than academic study. The number of electives is quite small – a choice between more than just 2 subjects for electives in each semester would perhaps increase the students' opportunity to study a wider spectrum of topics that interest them. The students have an opportunity to increase their language proficiency studying a variety of languages within restricted electives. The question that arises is the choice of languages besides the program specialization languages (English, Latvian, Russian). The SER should account clearly why Spanish, Chinese, German and Swedish are offered as the restricted elective choices by the programme. Another question related to this is the allocation of credit points to different language courses, ranging from 2 to 10. Why is there such a difference between the language courses? It is noticeable that higher level courses earn the students fewer points. This seems to undermine the motivation for students to enrol into higher level language courses. The above – allocation of credit points to courses – seems somewhat arbitrary. Especially in cases where the course is worth just one credit point (e.g., Psychology of Art, Contemporary Russian Literature, etc.) a question arises if the subject can be discussed in sufficient detail within the scope of time that has been envisaged.

In terms of study programme implementation methods, the SER lists lectures, seminars, practical classes, independent work, elaboration of research papers and reports, e-learning in Moodle as the 26 study forms implemented for reaching the programme outcomes. Different study programmes utilize a wide variety of approaches (individual and group projects, micro-studies, graded tests, mid-term and course final exams, observation tasks, reports on independent reading and presentations, etc.) to promote learner-centeredness during studies. The SER notes that the studies are conducted following the 'Regulations on studies at Daugavpils University', incorporating students' individual needs to the planning and implementation of course work (cf. SER p. 143). Meeting the programme goals is related to the available research literature. Here mostly up- to date- respective lists have been provided, but there is great variety in the volume of compulsory reading ranging from generally 5 to 6 sources up to more than 12 (Creative and academic writing (in Latvian). Occasionally the list of compulsory reading does not seem to address the course content (e.g., the compulsory list of Creative and academic writing (in English) does not mention any academic writing textbooks). There is variety in the amount of assessment conducted: both formative and summative assessment have been incorporated in the programmes. The e-environments Moodle and Zoom have been chosen for virtual study, allowing a variety of means for materials distribution, lectures,

group and individual work as well as assessment. All these activities seem to be actively used by the faculty, sustaining students' participation in case of family or job challenges.

The internship within the study program takes up 1 CP in a semester. The internship is managed by DU. It finds and recommends the respective institutions to the students. The internship management has been appropriately standardized by providing 'Regulations on the Academic Practice of DU Faculties of the Humanities' outlining the aim, tasks, its course, evaluation, organization as well as remuneration of the employers and supervisors. The document REGULATIONS ON THE ACADEMIC INTERNSHIP OF THE ABSP "LANGUAGE AND CULTURE STUDIES" (Annex 3.2.4. ) outlines the internship in terms of its aim, organization, course and evaluation and is a concrete basis for assuring that the students are involved in activities related to the achievement of learning outcomes.

The principles for choosing topics for the Bachelor's Theses have been clearly formulated (SER p. 146- 147), and there is a standard procedure for choosing and approving the topics. The latter are approved by the Council of the Faculty of the Humanities. It is not clear, however, why the expected length for the term and BA papers differs for students writing in different languages – those writing in English can write a shorter paper (cf. Annex 3.2.6.).

The graduates of the study programme 'Language and Culture Studies' are to be awarded the Bachelor's degree in Humanities in Literature and Linguistics. Since quite a number of restricted elective courses and the mandatory sub-programme specialization module for Russian II comprises different level language courses, the degree to be awarded should be a degree in Language Studies and Programmes. According to ISCED, language programmes are excluded from 0232 if the language is taught as a foreign or a second language (Russian and English sub-programmes in the present programme), and are to be included in 0231 'Language acquisition'. The mapping should be revised. For example, it is impossible to reach all the marked learning outcomes of the language acquisition courses especially at A1 level, i.e., to know and understand complex phenomena and processes in a foreign language and be aware of the trends in modern linguistics or use scientific approaches to solving problems or use the acquired knowledge in promoting their professional career and further research work.

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

Overall, the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' has a clear rationale for the curriculum, it is comprehensive and incorporates a wide variety of subjects which aim to meet knowledge, skill and competency outcomes that have been aligned for all the proposed sub-programmes. The programme utilizes a wide variety of methodological approaches including e-learning to ensure learner-centeredness during studies. While internship is included in the programme, its scope is too small and its content fairly ambiguous to significantly contribute to the study outcomes.

#### **Strengths**

1. The programme has a clear modular structure.
2. The programme is comprehensive and offers a wide variety of subjects designed to provide a thorough theoretical basis for the field.
3. Alignment of courses in the parallel sub-programmes promises equality in the essence of the qualification awarded after completing each of the sub-programmes.
4. Contemporary, versatile methodology with the focus on learner-centeredness is used to deliver the courses.
5. E-learning has been effectively incorporated in the delivery of the programme.

6. A clearly formulated procedure exists for developing graduation theses.

#### Weaknesses

1. The content of the programme is only partly reflected in the qualification awarded: the programme is 'Language and Culture Studies', the qualification Bachelor of Arts in Humanities in Literature and Linguistics, does not include culture.
2. The names of the modules are not transparent, their names confuse rather than clarify, e.g. Philology, Anglophone literature, Interdisciplinarity.
3. A very limited number of electives.
4. Ambiguity in the allocation of credit points for the courses, e.g., Russian B1-B2 (6 CP) vs. Russian B2-C1 (4 CP).
5. Imbalance in the amount of mandatory reading expected varies from one course to the next without apparent justification.
6. Approaches to assessment vary from course to course.
7. Requirements for graduation thesis scope depend on the language the thesis is written in for no clear justification: a different length is expected depending on the language the thesis is written in (Annex 3. 2. 6).
8. Internship is small in scope and ambiguous in content.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

N/A

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

#### **Analysis**

The resources and provision of the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' correspond to the conditions of the study programme implementation and achievement of the learning outcomes and are incorporated in overall provision for the implementation of the study field (SER, p.38.-49).

The resources of the Faculty of Humanities available to students, including the material and technical base and equipment (for preparation, combination, integration, visualisation and distribution of study and research materials), information networks (Internet, intranet, Moodle), 28 databases (library network, databases of DU research centres, free access to databases (databases of literature resources), materials (research materials, scientific publications, archives), services (administrative, financial, IT and network support services, access to official statistics), computer applications and software provide for acquisition all study courses offered in the programme, as well as conducting research, and provide a flexible and student-centred environment.

The important resources for the implementation of the ABSP are centres of the departments of the Faculty of Humanities - Centre for Latvian Studies, Centre of Lithuanistics, Confucius Classroom, Centre of Russian Language and Culture, Regional German Language, Country Studies Centre for Further Education, Centre of information on France Robert Schuman Foundation. The methodological support for the implementation of the study programme at DU is extensive and prepared in accordance with the specifics of the field of language and culture studies. Currently the available

literature is sufficient to provide for the programmes.

In addition to traditional information sources, DU provides access to more than 100,000 subscribed e-sources in various fields of science. To expand the diversity of the study courses, new e-learning courses are being developed and introduced, and the existing methodological materials are being updated and modernized in the Moodle environment. According to the information provided in the SER (p.156), the sources of funding of the programme are state funding - state-funded budget places and students' personal funding. Continuous funding of sub-programmes with small number of students or groups of international students might pose the risks to the sustainability of the study programme and its sub-programmes. DU supports the implementation of studies in this programme.

The number of state-funded budget places in the study programme is 131. The tuition fee for the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' is 4800 EUR (for three years). Costs per student are calculated by the head of the Finance and Accounting Department of DU, based on the calculations on the provision of the study programme submitted by the management of the study programme. The minimum number of students in the study programme to ensure its profitability - 100 persons.

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

The resources, materials and provision of the study programme correspond to the conditions of its implementation and achievement of the learning outcomes.

#### **Strengths**

1. Moodle is used as an e-learning environment.
2. Good e-studies environment for on-site studies is available.
3. DU ensures access to the subscribed databases as well as regularly purchase the necessary literature sources.

#### **Weakness**

1. There is overall reliance on literature sources in the languages of the programme implementation (other than Latvian and English) provided by the centres of the Faculty of Humanities - Confucius Classroom, Regional German Language, Centre of information on France Robert Schuman Foundation, the functioning of which might be terminated.

### **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The resources, materials and provision of the study programme correspond to the conditions of its implementation and achievement of the learning outcomes.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

The qualification of the academic staff involved in the implementation of ABSP 'Language and

Culture Studies' is appropriate for the specifics of the study programme and its implementation conditions. Teaching staff meets all necessary requirements defined by regulatory acts. The official language proficiency of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the academic bachelor's study programme 'Language and cultural studies' is confirmed to be compatible with the 'Regulations regarding the extent of knowledge of the official language and the procedures for examining the proficiency in the official language' for the performance of their professional duties.

The implementation of the study programme is ensured by 33 lecturers (4 professors, 1 prof., leading researcher, 4 associate professors, 1 Dr. philol., leading researcher, 1 Dr. philol researcher, 10 docents, 1 leading researcher, 10 lecturers, 2 assistants) representing the Department of English Philology and Translatology, the Department of Latvian Language, the Department of Latvian Literature and Culture, the Department of Russian Studies and Slavic Linguistics, and the Department of Foreign Languages of the Faculty of Humanities, which provide the teaching most of the mandatory and restricted elective study courses. Two visiting lecturers (1 professor and 1 docent) participate in the implementation of the programme. There are no visible risks in the structure of the academic staff – the staff has adequate competencies linked with the delivered courses. (Annexes II.2.3.7- native language and 2.3.7. - foreign language, SER, p. 157-158). The participation of postdoctoral fellow Evita Badina in the study programme is a good example of how continuity is ensured within the study field. It is mentioned in the SER (p.159) that opportunities to attract Fulbright scholars, scientists, writers, public workers recognized in Latvia, Europe, and the world are taken. Examples of such participation are provided in most cases only for teaching foreign languages. No information is provided on the cases of teaching mandatory part courses (A).

The ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' has an academic profile. In the period under evaluation, some changes in the team occurred due to retirement or termination of contracts. Based on the SER and observations collected during the visit, no gaps were identified in the composition of academic staff from the perspective of legal requirements. The students recognize the high level of involvement of the teaching staff and reported no problems related to the teaching staff. Graduates also pointed out the willingness and availability of teaching staff to help with their work-related questions. The high involvement in the Erasmus + framework by the teaching staff is noticeable throughout the period under evaluation, but it is not clear from the data provided in Annex 2.3.5 what type of Erasmus visits were carried out (teaching or training). In any case, the number of visits is adequate. High engagement and student-focused approach of academic staff has been observed from the interviews with teaching staff, graduates and students. Based on the information in SER and the on-site meeting with the programme's teaching staff, the experts agreed that the competencies of the teaching staff working in the study programme are well balanced and meet the requirements set by the legal acts.

The contribution to the study field is visible. Some members of the teaching staff are actively involved in the publication of their research in peer review journals. The possibility of publishing in the Faculty collections of scientific articles is used by all members of the teaching staff. The number of publications in conference proceedings is also quite high (e.g., IATED conferences). A disproportion in the workload of teaching staff and high level of fragmentation of teaching courses (mostly 1-2 credit points) might be one of the reasons teaching staff are not able to involve more in research. However, during the evaluation period, the total number of publications assigned to the study field is very high. Taking into consideration the fact that the competition among study programmes in Latvia and Baltic region is high, pursuing publishing in a higher standard journal (e.g., with IF/ SNIP) could be a competitive stand out factor.

The SER notes (p.161) that in the implementation of the programme, as well as planning its



development, the lecturers of all participating departments of the Faculty of Humanities actively cooperate not only within the subprogrammes, but also within the framework of the entire programme, which was also confirmed by the teaching staff during the onsite visit. The cooperation of lecturers results not only in developing and implementing study courses (Latvian literary and cultural processes, Text creation, analysis and interpretation, and others) but also in joined research articles (SER, p. 161) which help to share good practice on an international level. The teaching staff confirmed that the existing mutual cooperation measures ensure fruitful cooperation with the students, colleagues and management of the study programme.

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

The numbers of teaching staff in the study programme are sufficient, and the formal qualifications of teachers exceed the legal requirements. From the CVs of the teaching staff and their academic activities, it is obvious that the qualification of the teaching staff is adequate to ensure the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programmes. In the interviews with students and graduates, it was made clear for the expert team that the students appreciated the teachers very much and that they found them to be qualified, supportive, and dedicated to teaching.

#### **Strengths**

1. The qualification of the academic staff involved in the study programme implementation complies with reaching the outcomes of the study programme, as academic staff have attended various professional development courses and apply the gained knowledge in their teaching practice. High engagement and student-focused approach of academic staff has been observed during the visit.
2. The numbers of teaching staff in the study programme are sufficient, and their formal qualifications exceed the legal requirements.
3. Good mutual collaboration and cooperation between the academic staff and the programme director have been established.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. A disproportionate level of teaching obligations effects negatively the necessary time resources to be able to engage in research activities. The issue of workload distribution among teaching, research, and other activities per each of the academic positions (i.e., Professor, Associate Professor, Docent/Assistant Professor, and Lecturer) should be reconsidered.
2. The expert panel suggests providing better and more detailed information on international research proposals or projects in which teaching staff are involved, as well as increasing the international co-authorship in published papers.
3. A system for inviting leading researchers and professors, guest specialists from the language-related industry, also from abroad, to fill part-time consulting positions and enhance the competencies of academic and research staff could be improved.

### **Assessment of the requirement [7]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The list of academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme is included in Annex 2.3.7 List of teaching staff. The number of professors and associate professors who are

elected to academic positions in the university and participate in the implementation of the compulsory part and the limited elective part of the academic study programme exceeds the threshold stated in the law - five.

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached document

'3.2.1.ABSP\_Language\_and\_Cult\_St\_Compliance\_with\_National\_education\_standard.pdf' confirms that the study programme generally complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 240 'Regulations on the national standard of academic education'.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached study course descriptions

'3.2.1.ABSP\_Language\_and\_cult\_st\_Description\_Study\_Courses.zip' are prepared in Latvian and English. The descriptions comply with the regulations set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The provided Diploma sample

3.1.2.ABSP\_Language\_and\_Cult\_St\_Diploma\_and\_supplement\_sample.zip' complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to Cabinet Regulation No. 202 'Procedure for issuing state recognized documents of higher education'. However there are minor criteria nonaffecting technical issues - the diploma supplement sample has a misprint in the Latvian language 'Humanitāro zinātņu bakalaura grāds literatūrā un lingvistikā ar specializāciju specializāciju anglistikas studijās'. Likewise, the word 'commission' in the sample bachelor's diploma has been misspelt.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The provided staff table in the SER 'Language and Culture Studies' 3.4.1. and the DU letter of confirmation Nr. 4-40/292 affirms that the academic staff of the study programme complies with

the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached CVs of the staff members and the DU confirmation letter Nr. 4-40/282 verify that the state language proficiency is compliant.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached CVs of the staff members and the DU confirmation letter 4-40/281 verify that the language proficiency in English is at least B2.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Sample of attached study agreement "3.1.2.AMSP\_Agreement\_studies.pdf" complies with MK. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached cooperation agreement (in '2.1.4.Agreement\_student\_takeover.zip') indicates that students will have the opportunity to continue their studies in the relevant study programmes at the University of Latvia.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

DU confirmation letter No. 4-40/283 states that students are guaranteed 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 college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The study programme mostly complies with the regulatory enactments, however, the sample of the attached study agreement needs to be proofread for factual correctness.

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

In summary, the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' complies with the study field. The aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and consistent. There is a decline in the number of students in all sub-programmes due to reasons not connected with the study programme as such. Overall, the study programme has a clear rationale for the curriculum; it is comprehensive and incorporates a wide variety of subjects which aim to meet knowledge, skill and competency outcomes that have been aligned for all the proposed sub-programmes. While internship is included in the programme, its scope is too small and its content fairly ambiguous to significantly contribute to the study outcomes. The numbers of teaching staff in the study programme are sufficient, and their formal qualifications exceed the legal requirements. From the CVs of the academic staff and their academic activities, it is obvious that their qualification is adequate to ensure the objectives and the learning outcomes of the study programme.

**Strengths**

1. The aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies' complies with the needs of society, especially in the Latgale region.
2. A large percentage of the graduates of the sub-programme majoring in English are employed in the relevant or related fields or continue their studies in the academic and professional MSP at DU as well as other universities in Latvia and abroad.
3. The sub-programme majoring in Russian studies has large employment and internship opportunities in the Latgale region.
4. Contemporary, versatile methodology with the focus on learner-centeredness is used to deliver the courses.
5. The qualification of the academic staff involved in the study programme implementation complies with reaching the outcomes of study programme, as the academic staff have attended various

professional development courses and apply the gained knowledge in their teaching practices.  
6. High engagement and a student-focused approach of academic staff can be observed.

#### Weaknesses

1. There is a decline in the admission and graduate numbers of students in the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies'.
2. Although being used as a language of instruction in the sub-programme 'Russian Studies', the study course have not been provided in Russian.
3. The content and the name of the programme is only partly reflected in the degree awarded.
4. There appears to be a notable lack of theoretical content courses in Russian II.
5. Inconsistency in the allocation of credit points for the courses can be observed.
6. Imbalance in the amount of mandatory reading expected varies from one course to the next without apparent justification.
7. The amount of credit points allocated for the Internship is too small in scope.
8. A disproportionate level of teaching obligations effects negatively the necessary time resources to conduct research.
9. The free elective part of the study programme does not comply with the regulatory enactments.

### Evaluation of the study programme "Language and Culture Studies"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### 2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Language and Culture Studies"

#### Short-term recommendations

Since Russian is used as a language of instruction in the sub-programme 'Russian Studies', the course descriptions need to be offered in Russian as well.

The content and the name of the programme should be aligned with the degree awarded.

In part A (specialisation) of sub-programme Russian II the proportion of theoretical subjects needs to be increased to make it more academic.

The expected length of graduation papers for writers in Latvian and English need to be adjusted equally.

Students should be given a real possibility of selecting courses in the free elective part.

#### Long-term recommendations

Effective marketing strategy should be created to attract possible local and international candidates for the study programme.

The balance of the study load should be re-evaluated including the scope of independent studies and adjusted to be manageable and equally distributed in the programme courses.

Long-term measures on balancing the workload of the staff between teaching hours and research activities should be taken.

A clear rationale for the allocation of credit points for courses needs to be given (e.g., Internship).

## **II - "Eastern European Culture and Business Relations" ASSESSMENT**

### **II - "Eastern European Culture and Business Relations" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

The academic BSP 'Eastern European Culture and Business Relations' (programme code 43227) is implemented as a three-year full-time programme in Latvian and English at the University of Daugavpils, Daugavpils, Vienības iela 13, LV-5401. The degree to be obtained is 'Bachelor's Degree of Humanities in Language Studies and Programs' (written in the 'parameters' section). However, another degree is seen in the diploma supplement and the sample diploma: 'Bachelor's of Art degree in Language Studies and programmes'. Besides, the SER states that the graduates will receive "Bachelor of Humanities in Eastern European Cultural Studies" (Table 2.1.1), while The Agreement on Studies at Daugavpils University (3.1.2) states that students will be awarded the 'Bachelor's Degree of Humanities in Cultural Studies of Eastern Europe' (acquired degree and professional qualification). It has to be remarked that a professional qualification is not awarded in this programme. This inconsistency has to be eliminated.

The content and the learning outcomes of the ABSP, which are related to culture, sociology, economics, history of art, and politics indicate that the programme is partly related to the study field "Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes". The strategic aim of the programme is "to ensure the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and research skills in the field of culture and business of Eastern Europe taking into account current political and social trends." The field-related objectives of the programme relate to culture, business, and the tasks to - cultural and business contacts, contemporary societal and political challenges, intercultural communication. Thus, there is no reference to languages. Considering the learning outcomes, only one (S9) pertains to communication skills in three languages, however, not specifying the proficiency level. In 'International Standard Classification of Education (ISCE), code 231 corresponds to education programme group 227 of the classification of the Latvian education system. ISCE code 231 refers to language acquisition and includes the study of related cultures, literature, linguistics and phonetics if related to the specific language being acquired. There are no learning outcomes of the study programme concerning literature and linguistics available. The programme does not comprise any mandatory courses in linguistics or literature. The restricted elective courses, including 'communicative linguistics' (such a term is non-existent), are language learning courses, where alongside language learning, linguistics-related terms are acquired.

Despite the above mentioned, the aims, objectives and learning outcomes as well as admission requirements are interrelated. The duration and the scope of the study programme implementation, as well as the programme implementation languages, are reasonable and justified.

The academic programme envisages two academic internships, each lasting one week, which seem to be hardly sufficient. Qualitative and quantitative data on the employment of graduates is provided, proving that the graduates work in a variety of fields: culture, mass media, social sphere, business, tourism. Most of the graduates continue their studies at a Master's level.

The statistics of the period under evaluation show a decrease in the number of students over the past two years. In the academic year 2020/2021, 34 students were enrolled, while in the year 2021/2022 - 25 students. The number of graduates has also decreased - while there were 10 graduates in 2020 and 10 graduates in 2021, only 5 students graduated the programme in 2022. The dropout rate, as indicated in the SER, is 10-15%. The programme has been of interest to

international students representing the post-Soviet space. A positive trend has been observed: students from universities in the US are matriculated for one semester to acquire 30 ECT in regional studies and languages.

The corrections made to the study programme's parameters within the assessment of the study field are analyzed, justified and are supported. The justification for the studies which will be offered in English (previously, studies were conducted only in Latvian) is reasonable. In the SER (3.1.1.), it was mentioned that in the updated version of the programme, in addition to face-to-face studies, remote study and hybrid forms have been introduced. The programme is envisaged as a full-time study programme implying face-to-face studies. Therefore, remote study and even hybrid forms should not be considered as a regularity.

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

To conclude, the academic BSP 'Eastern European Culture and Business Relations' is implemented as a full-time 3-year programme in Latvian and English at the University of Daugavpils. The duration and scope of the study programme implementation, as well as the implementation languages, are reasonable and justified. The aims, objectives and learning outcomes are interrelated, while they are not directly related to the study field submitted for the accreditation (excluding S9). The statistics of the period under evaluation show a decrease in the number of students over the past two years; however, the programme attracts international students, especially from the US, who are matriculated for one semester in regional studies and languages.

#### **Strengths**

1. Qualitative and quantitative data on the employment of graduates prove that the graduates are employed in a variety of fields or continue their studies at a Master's level.
2. The programme has been of interest to international students representing the post-Soviet space, a positive trend being the matriculation of students from USA universities for one semester in regional studies and languages.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. The programme is partly related to the study field.
2. The documents submitted for accreditation contain four versions of the degree to be awarded. The correct degree is 'Bachelor's Degree of Humanities in Language Studies and Programs'.
3. The course 'Latvian language for foreigners' has to be included in the mandatory or the restrictive part of the study programme. Free elective courses are not to be mentioned in the course plan.

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

### **Analysis**

The study programme for Eastern European Culture and Business attempts to provide a concise approach to achieving the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Language Studies and Programs (cf. diploma supplement).

The SER offers a rationale for the courses incorporated in the course (p.103-104) with the instruction moving from providing the general principles for studying the field, discussing the state of the art, and cross- field aspects, as well as culture and business focal problems along with in-depth language studies and free electives.

The qualification offered, however, fails to communicate the essence of the training (the bulk of the courses attempt to focus on topic connected to cultural and business studies) and suggests that the

focus of education is on the language, which it clearly is not. A good level of language proficiency is envisaged, but there is no indication of the language level aimed for. It is recommended that the offered qualification be aligned with the content of the course. In addition to that, some of the results of the program need further clarification, e.g. the inclusion of current affairs and political processes as a knowledge outcome in the programme of culture and business, or the relationship between culture and art (if they are seen as synonyms) the difference between innovative and research activities (all on page 94).

The programme complies with national regulations, state education standard, i.e. includes all necessary parts: mandatory part - 72 (not less than 50 credits), a restricted elective part - 42 (not less than 20 credits) and the part of free elective courses - 6 CP. Fundamentals, principles, structure and methodology of the relevant field or sub-field of science (not less than 25 credits), the history and current issues of the development of the field or sub-field of science (not less than 10 credits), as well as the characteristics and issues of the field or sub-field of science in an interdisciplinary aspect (not less than 15 credits) are adequately represented (Cf. annex 3.2.1). The SER gives a description of the organization of studies on pages 96 - 99, 104 - 106 as well as annex 3.2.1. mapping of the courses.

As regards mapping course aims to the programme aims, a fairly close contact is demonstrated by the programme developers. Overall, however, the programme has distinctly more weighting on business and marketing than the issues related to culture.

An aspect that requires further explanation, however, is the annex of the study plan for the programme with a list of courses and the allocation of credit points to particular courses. First, although a particular domain specifies the number of points in the domain (e.g., NOZPAM - 21KP) the courses included in the domain add up to more (here for example 30 KP). It is not clear if some courses are subdivisions of others, can they be taken individually or in conjunction with other courses (e.g., Fundamentals of art studies, Eastern European Business). Also, why seemingly similar courses (e.g., Eastern European Business I and II) have been allocated a different amount of credit points).

Free elective courses are enlisted in the study programme plan; however, they should not be specified allowing students to select courses from outside of the study programme.

The study course 'Latvian language for foreigners' should be moved to the mandatory or restricted part of the programme for international full-time students.

In terms of study programme implementation methods, the SER lists lectures, seminars, hybrid study forms, individual work and work in the Moodle environment as the main methodological approaches and media. The review of individual study programs shows that besides the above the faculty use individual and group projects, graded tests, writing of proposals, observation tasks, reports on independent reading and presentations to promote learner-centeredness during studies. The SER shows how attempts are constantly made to cater for the diverse linguistic needs of the students given the difference in the origin of the applicants and their consequent language proficiency. It seems that the demands set for the faculty to operate a particular course simultaneously in three languages (cf. p. 107) is going beyond reasonable professional expectations a member of the faculty should provide. Meeting the programme goals is related to the available research literature. Here mostly up- to date- respective lists have been provided, but there is great variety in the volume of compulsory reading ranging from generally 5 to 6 sources up to more than 20 (e.g., Applied Business Ethics - 22 compulsory items listed. Also, the language of the required texts suggests that everybody is able to cope with texts in Russian, which seems unlikely. There is



also noticeable variety in the amount of assessment conducted. Both formative and summative assessment have been incorporated in the programmes but, for example, the number of mid-term tests can range from 2 to as many as 8 mid-term tests (Fundamentals of Economics). The e-environments Moodle and Zoom have been chosen for virtual study, allowing a variety of means for materials distribution, lectures, group and individual work as well as assessment. All these activities seem to be actively used by the faculty, sustaining students' participation in case of family or job challenges.

The internship within the study programme takes up 2 KP and is distributed equally between two terms, increasing in scope in each term. The internship is managed by DU finding and recommending the respective institutions to the students. The university practice manager seems to have a long tradition of managing the network of internship location. The internship management has been appropriately standardized by providing 'Regulations on the Academic Practice of DU Faculties of the Humanities' outlining the aim, tasks, its course, evaluation, organization as well as remuneration of the employers and supervisors. Given the current geopolitical situation, a question arises about finding representative places for the internship, places that could cater for the need to 'acquire theoretical knowledge in practice in the field of Eastern European culture and business relation' as specified in the Regulations. The actual essence of the internship remains ambiguous, i.e., it is not completely clear what its concrete essence is.

There are verbalized principles for choosing topics for the Bachelor's Theses (SER p. 110), the topics are approved by the Council of the Faculty. The theses are mostly theoretical in nature, as the applied part, though desirable, is not mandatory. Still, the titles of theses listed seem to imply that concrete practical topics still feature in BA level research.

The mapping has incomplete text, e.g., knowledge No 5, skill No 3. Skill No 4: 'Are able to communicate in three languages, in writing and orally, in both familiar and unfamiliar context' is the only language-related learning outcome pertaining to the degree awarded: 'Bachelor of Arts in Language Studies and Programs'.

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

Overall, the study programme is poorly connected to the degree of the Bachelor of Arts of Language Studies and Programs that it claims to provide. The courses mostly focus on topics connected to cultural and business studies. The numerous courses employ diverse methodological approaches but attention is needed in the scope of independent work expected in different courses – the variety is notable. The internship has been appropriately managed but its content has not been adequately described in the SER. The procedures for managing graduation research and defence are in place.

#### **Strengths**

1. The courses in the programme are chosen so that they would meet the programme outcomes in terms of the knowledge, skills and competencies provided.
2. A great variety of courses are offered that give students a wide basis for discussing problems related to business and culture.
3. The instruction makes use of traditional as well as modern teaching approaches and relies on contemporary research literature.
4. The teaching is, for the most part learner-centered. The students' needs and expectations are taken into consideration while planning the medium of instruction in terms of both language and contact/ virtual study.

5. The internship is systematically planned.

#### Weaknesses

1. It is not clear how the courses contribute to the degree given.
2. The programme includes occasional courses that are loosely related to the essence of the programme.
3. Allocation of credit points for courses needs explanation.
4. The scope of mandatory reading needs to be standardized in terms of the scope expected with regard to the credit points offered for the respective course.
5. The number of tests expected within a particular course needs adjustment in terms of their number.
6. The current geopolitical situation will probably inhibit a successful completion of the Internship, as severe restrictions hinder widespread communication between the students and the target institutions.
7. Free elective courses are enlisted in the study programme plan; however, they should not be specified allowing students to select courses from outside of the study programme.
8. The study course 'Latvian language for foreigners' should be moved to the mandatory or restricted part of the programme for international full-time students.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

N/A

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

#### **Analysis**

The resources and provision of the ABSP 'Eastern European Culture and Business Relations' correspond to the conditions of the study programme implementation and achievement of the learning outcomes and are incorporated in overall provision for the implementation of the study field (SER, p.38.-49).

The resources of the Faculty of Humanities available to students, including the material and technical base and equipment (for preparation, combination, integration, visualisation and distribution of study and research materials), information networks (Internet, intranet, Moodle), databases (library network, databases of DU research centres, free access to databases (databases of literature resources), materials (research materials, scientific publications, archives), services (administrative, financial, IT and network support services, access to official statistics), computer applications and software provide for acquisition all study courses offered in the programme, as well as conducting research, and provide a flexible and student-centred environment.

Important resources for the implementation of the ABSP are centres of the departments of the Faculty of Humanities - Centre of Lithuanistics and Centre of Russian Language and Culture. Centre of Polish culture is in the process of opening. By working in these centres students of the programme get an additional opportunity to learn the culture of the countries under study. The methodological support for the implementation of the study programme at DU is extensive and

prepared in accordance with the specifics of the field of language and culture studies. In addition to traditional information sources, DU provides access to more than 100,000 subscribed e-sources in various fields of science. To expand the diversity of the study courses, new e-learning courses are being developed and introduced, and the existing methodological materials are being updated and modernized in the Moodle environment.

According to information provided in SER (p.112) the sources of funding of the programme are state funding - state-funded budget places and students' personal funding. Continuous funding of programme with small number of students might pose the risks to the sustainability of the study programme. DU supports the implementation of studies in this programme. The number of international students from the USA shows good perspectives for the programme development.

The number of state-funded budget places in the study programme is 32. The tuition fee for ABSP 'Eastern European Culture and Business' is 3200 EUR.

Costs per student are calculated by the head of the Finance and Accounting Department of DU, based on the calculations on the provision of the study programme submitted by the management of study programme. The minimum number of students in two years of the study programme to ensure its profitability is 18 people for studies in Latvian, 10 people – for studies in English. It is difficult to evaluate as the numbers provided in the SER (3.3 section in SER) might not correspond to the real costs.

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

The resources, materials and provision of the study programme correspond to the conditions of its implementation and achievement of the learning outcomes.

#### **Strengths**

1. Moodle is used as an e-learning environment.
2. Good e-studies environment for on-site studies.
3. DU ensures access to the subscribed databases as well as regularly purchases the necessary literature sources.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. Specific literature sources for sub-parts of the programme are not mentioned in the SER, only general information on the resources is provided.

### **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The resources, materials and provision of the study programme correspond to the conditions of its implementation and the achievement of the learning outcomes, although these are not relevant for the study field under assessment.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

Implementing the ABSP 'Eastern European Culture and Business Relations' requires the participation of academic staff from the Department of Latvian Literature and Culture, the Department of Latvian Language, the Department of Russian and Slavic Linguistics, the Department of History, the Department of English Philology and Translatology (the Faculty of Humanities), Department of Economics and Sociology, the Department of Law (the Faculty of Social Sciences), Department of Pedagogy and Educational Psychology (The Faculty of Education and Management), the Center of Sustainable Education, and the Centre of Social Research of the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences.

It is certified that the members of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the academic Bachelor's study programme 'Eastern European Culture and Business Relations' (programme code - 43227), of the study direction 'Language and Culture Studies, Native Language Studies, and Language Programs' meet the requirements of at least B2 level in foreign language according to the European Language Assessment levels (Annex 2.3.7). The official language proficiency of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the academic bachelor's study programme 'Eastern European Culture and Business Relations' is confirmed to be compatible with the 'Regulations regarding the degree of knowledge of the official language and the procedures to examine the proficiency in the official language for the performance of their professional duties. As stated in SER (p. 113) the process of attracting and evaluating lecturers is transparent and efficient, the recruitment of lecturers takes place in accordance with the Regulations on Academic and Administrative Positions. 22 lecturers work in the study programmes, 5 in the position of professor, 5 as associate professors, 7 docents, 2 leading researchers, and 6 lecturers. The part of the teaching staff representing the study field under evaluation has the appropriate competencies related to the courses delivered.

Changes in the composition of the teaching staff did not negatively affect the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments in the period under evaluation, as they happened due to the retirement, change of work place of members of teaching staff. Some changes positively affected the implementation of the programme, but they mostly influence the courses in Law or Economics which are not part of the study direction under evaluation. Docent O. Nikitina, who joined the study programme only in May 2022, could be a good example of implementing practical accents into the study process considering the multidisciplinary origin of the programme. The involvement in the Erasmus + framework by the teaching staff is noticeable throughout the assessment period, but it is not clear from the data provided in Annex 2.3.5 which type of Erasmus visit was carried out (teaching or training).

Due to interdisciplinary nature of the ABSP 'Eastern European Culture and Business Relations', only part of the teaching staff implementing the programme present their research related to the study direction under evaluation. As mentioned before, the disproportion in the workload of teaching staff and the high level of fragmentation of teaching courses (mostly 1-2 credit points) might be one of the reasons why teaching staff are not able to engage more actively in research. However, during the evaluation period, the total number of publications assigned to the study field is very high. The teaching staff delivering the A courses in the programme published scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals and international conference proceedings indexed in Scopus or Clarivate Analytics WoS. The research conducted by the members of teaching staff helps to create a framework for the empirical basis of regional research, as indicated in SER (p. 52).

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the ABSP 'Eastern European Culture and Business Relations,' the exchange of information between academic staff is mediated by the programme director. On the

course level, cooperation between the academic staff is described in SER (p. 115). This cooperation ensures eliminating possibility of content overlapping, as well as ensuring that the courses logically follow each other. The SER mentions the joined activities of the teaching staff of the study programme and professors from Western universities who come with students enrolled in language courses and regional studies. Such cooperation leads to the improvement of teaching methods.

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

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. The research record of academic staff meets formal requirements. Collaboration between academic staff is at a good level.

#### **Strengths**

1. Academic staff have attended various professional development courses and apply the gained knowledge in their teaching practice.
2. High engagement and student-focused approach of teaching staff.
3. Good practices of collaboration between teaching staff from different study fields.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. Erasmus+ program opportunities are not sufficiently used to develop teaching methods in an international context and to further enhance foreign language competences.
2. The expert panel suggests providing better and more detailed information on international research proposals or projects in which DU staff are involved, as well as increasing the international co-authorship in published papers.
3. Develop and launch of special program for inviting leading researchers and professors, guest specialists from business, also from abroad, to fill part-time consulting positions and enhance the competencies of academic staff and research.

### **Assessment of the requirement [7]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The list of academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme is included in Annex 2.3.7 List of teaching staff. The number of professors and associate professors who are elected to academic positions in DU and participate in the implementation of the compulsory part and the limited elective part of the academic study programme exceed the threshold stated in the law - five.

### **2.5. Assessment of the Compliance**

#### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The free elective (C) study part is limited to a narrow scope of courses. By definition, the free

elective study part means that a student has the opportunity to choose any courses as per Law of Higher Education Institutions Section 6 (2). The attached document '3.2.1. ABSP\_Eastern\_Compliance with State Academic Standards.pdf' confirms that the study program partially complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 240 'Noteikumi par valsts akadēmiskās izglītības standartu'.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached study course descriptions '3.2.1. ABSP\_Eastern\_Description of study courses.zip' are prepared in Latvian and English. The descriptions comply with regulations set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The provided diploma sample '3.1.2. ABSP\_Eastern\_Diploma and supplement.zip' complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to MK No. 202 'Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus' . Minor technical issue - the degree to be obtained is 'Bachelor's Degree of Humanities in Language Studies and Programs' (written in the 'parameters' section). However, another degree is seen in the diploma supplement and the sample diploma: 'Bachelor's of Art degree in Language Studies and programmes'.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The provided staff table in SER 'Eastern European Culture and Business Relations' 3.4.1. and DU letter of confirmation Nr. 4-40/292 affirms that the academic staff of the study programme complies with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

The clause has been removed from the law as of 14.07.2022.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached CVs of the staff members and the DU confirmation letter No. 4-40/282 verify that the state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet Regulation No. 733 'Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi'.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached resumes of staff members and DU confirmation letter 4-40/281 verifies that the language proficiency in English is at least B2.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the attached study agreement '3.1.2.AMSP\_Agreement\_studies.pdf' complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 'Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi'.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached cooperation agreement (in '2.1.4.Agreement\_student\_takeover.zip') indicates that students will have the opportunity to continue their studies in the relevant study programmes at the University of Latvia.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

DU confirmation letter No. 4-40/283 states that students are guaranteed 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 university (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The study programme mostly complies with regulatory enactments. Yet, the free elective study part is limited to a provided narrow list of courses, therefore de facto representing the limited elective study part.

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

To conclude, the statistics of the period under evaluation show a decrease in the number of students over the past two years; however, the programme attracts international students, especially from the US, who are matriculated for one semester in regional studies and languages. The ABSP 'Eastern European Culture and Business Relations' is poorly connected to the qualification of the Bachelor of Arts of Language Studies and Programs that it claims to provide. The courses mostly focus on topics connected to cultural and business studies. The numerous courses employ diverse methodological approaches but attention is needed in the scope of independent work expected in different courses – the variety is notable. 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. The research record of academic staff meets formal requirements.

#### **Strengths**

1. Qualitative and quantitative data on the employment of graduates prove that the graduates are employed in a variety of fields or continue their studies at a Master's level.
2. The programme has been of interest to international students representing the post-Soviet space, a positive trend being the matriculation of students from USA universities for one semester in regional studies and languages.
3. A variety of courses are offered that give students a wide basis for discussing problems related to business and culture.
4. The teaching is, for the most part, learner-centered. The students' needs and expectations are taken into consideration.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. The programme is partly related to the study field.
2. It is not clear how the courses contribute to the degree awarded.
3. The programme includes occasional courses that are loosely related to the essence of the programme.
4. The scope of mandatory reading is not standardized in terms of the scope expected with regard to the credit points offered for the respective course.
5. The current geopolitical situation might question the relevance of courses related to economics,



commercial law in Russia and Belarus.

6. Erasmus+ program opportunities are insufficiently used.

7. The free elective study part de-facto is the restricted elective study part.

## **Evaluation of the study programme "Eastern European Culture and Business Relations"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

## **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Eastern European Culture and Business Relations"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

The study programme should better comply with the requirements of the study field under assesment.

Courses that would contribute to the degree awarded should be provided.

The documents submitted for accreditation need to be proofread for factual correctness, e.g., the degree awarded.

The course 'Latvian language for foreigners' has to be included in the mandatory or the restricted elective part of the study programme.

A clear connection between the scope of the course and the credit points need to be shown.

The types and scope of assessment (number of tests) administered across the courses need to be reviewed.

A clear rationale for the content of the Internship planned to reach the outcomes of the course need to be given.

Free elective courses should not be mentioned in the study plan.

### **Long-term recommendations**

The balance of the study load should be re-evaluated including the scope of independent studies and adjusted to be manageable and equally distributed in the programme courses.

Measures on balancing the workload of the staff between teaching hours and research activities should be taken.

Global performance indicators should be provided, as most of the SER is a description of how the system works but does not provide enough CPIs to monitor the performance.

## **II - "Philology and Language Practices" ASSESSMENT**

### **II - "Philology and Language Practices" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

The academic MSP 'Philology and Language Practices' (programme code 45226) complies with the

study field. It is implemented as a two-year full-time programme in Latvian and English at the University of Daugavpils, Daugavpils, Vienības iela 13, LV-5401. The degree to be obtained is 'Master of Arts degree in Literature and Linguistics' with a specialisation in English philology/Latvian philology/Russian philology/comparative philology. The English translation of the degree must be Master's degree in Humanities in Literature and Linguistics (in Latvian: Humanitāro zinātņu maģistra grāds literatūrā un lingvistikā). The experts would like to draw the attention to the signatories of the diploma – the Chairman of the Council signs the diploma of the MSP 'Philology and Language Practices', while the Chairman of the State Examination Commission signs the diploma of the ABSP 'Language and Culture Studies'.

The corrections made to the study programme's parameters within the assessment of the study field have been analyzed, justified and are supported. The name of the programme has been changed, adding the aspect of language practice. Also, the degree to be obtained has been changed to meet the requirements of the current legislation. The structure and the content of the programme have been changed - the content and structure of the sub-programmes are implemented on a modular basis. The programme has added practical aspects of the programme, e.g. language acquisition and translation.

The courses contained in the programme suggest that it is a programme in linguistics and literature; the element of language practice does not seem to be clearly revealed and might be understood as language learning and as such might mislead a potential student; therefore, it would be more transparent to change the name of the programme to reflect the degree it provides.

The aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. The duration and scope of the study programme implementation, as well as the implementation languages, are reasonable and justified. The aims and objectives (tasks) are defined for each sub-programme and are interrelated with the aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the programme. However, the learning outcomes of each sub-programme have not been formulated (Law on Higher Education Institutions, Article 55, Part One, Paragraph Two, Subpoint a).

Social justification of the programme has been provided by emphasizing the role of fundamental and applied humanitarian, linguistic, cultural, literary, psycholinguistic, cognitive knowledge and skills, which are in demand in the changing global intellectual labour market. The range of workplaces of programme graduates mentioned prove the relevance of education in the humanities. However, there are no quantitative indicators mentioned. The graduates of the programme can continue their studies in a doctoral programme.

The number of students enrolled in the four sub-programmes (Latvian philology, English philology, Russian philology and comparative philology) is too small for all the sub-programmes to be feasible. There is no data as to the number of students in each sub-programme. According to the information provided, there were 18 students in the year 2021/2022 (Dynamics of the number of students) but only 4 state-funded places and no private funding ('Distribution of the number of students by funding sources'). A question arises who financed the other students. The number of graduates is also very small 3 (in 2020, 2021, 2022), especially considering the existence of subprogrammes. The experts tend to believe that the small number of students in the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' was largely influenced by the external factors described in the SER rather than any internal problems.

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

To conclude, the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' complies with the study field. The aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and consistent. The duration and the scope of the study programme implementation, as well as the implementation languages, are reasonable and justified. The study programme is socially justified. It is believed that the small number of students in the programme has been caused by external factors.

#### Strengths

1. The aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' complies with the needs of society, especially in the Latgale region.
2. The graduates of the programme are employed in a range of workplaces, proving the relevance of education in the humanities. The programme graduates can continue their studies in a doctoral programme.

#### Weaknesses

1. The number of students enrolled in the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' and its four subprogrammes (Latvian philology, English philology, Russian philology and comparative philology) is too small for all the sub-programmes to be feasible.
2. There is no data as to the number of students in each sub-programme.
3. There are no quantitative indicators of the employed graduates provided.
4. The English translation of the degree should be: Master's degree in Humanities in Literature and Linguistics (in Latvian: Humanitāro zinātņu maģistra grāds literatūrā un lingvistikā).
5. The courses contained in the programme suggest that it is a programme in linguistics and literature; therefore, it would be more transparent to change the name of the programme to better reflect the degree it provides.
6. The learning outcomes of each sub-programme have not been formulated.

## 2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

### Analysis

The AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' seeks instruction and practice to achieve the degree of Master of Arts Degree in Literature and Linguistics.

The programme has defined its aim and learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and competences (cf. Annex 3.2.1.) and devised a system of courses to reach the said aims. The programme allows specialization into the Latvian, Russian and English language, and it can be completed in Latvian. The name of the programme is vague, however. The courses contained in the programme suggest that it is a programme in linguistics and literature. The term philology is obscure, and internship is offered in the scope of 1 CP in the programme. It would be more transparent to change the name of the programme to reflect the degree it provides.

The programme complies with the national regulations and state education standard, as it has a mandatory part not less than 24 CP and 20 CP are allocated for the elaboration of the Master's thesis, and the total volume is 80 CP. However, the submitted documents need to be checked for accuracy: According to annex 3.2.1, there is a mandatory part - 44 CP, master's thesis elaboration - 20 CP and limited electives - 16 CP, while according to the SER (p. 174) and AMSP\_plan in the Annex, no restricted electives or electives are listed. Moreover, A-Compulsory courses (Research and approbation of theoretical findings in the field of science) make up 29 CP not 30 CP (cf. AMSP\_plan in the Appendix), as academic practice comprises 1 CP.

The organization of the courses has been outlined on pp. 173 - 175 of the SER. The courses offered are well linked to the specified outcomes and overall contribute to the qualification well. The

structure of the programme raises certain issues, however. It is divided into two main groups: mandatory courses and mandatory courses in sub-programmes. Thus, all the course offered are compulsory for the students aspiring for the current degree. There are no elective courses that would cater for the students' idiosyncratic interests.

The two groups of courses are divided into modules according to the rationale provided in the SER p. 174. The categorization of the modules is somewhat confusing, the use of 'philology' as an umbrella term, 'approbation of theoretical findings' (p. 174, annex 3.2.1.) – its meaning should be clarified it preferably replaced by a more modern categorization 'studies'. The programme offers a huge variety of courses that are distributed between the 4 semesters of study. It would have been helpful to know what the principle of course distribution is. The courses are numerous which altogether potentially offers a good overview of linguistics and literature to the students. The allocation of credit points ranges from 1 to 6 (on average 2), yet the principle of credit point allocation is not clear. The SER maintains that the scope of students' independent work is increasing (p. 177), but there is no discussion about how this has affected the course plans or credit point allocation. The great number of courses, all of which are mandatory, however, suggests a need for a vast number of contact hours every semester. Contrary to what the SER claims, the tight schedule seems to leave little time for the students' independent study. It is difficult to assess how well the study programme caters for the labour market trends, as the concrete occupations of the prospective graduates have only been mentioned in general terms – a modern philologist, language/literature/ culture teacher (cf. SER pp. 171 – 172). The program caters well for the familiarity with the science trends (cf. annex 3.2.1. - a variety of theoretical courses, participation in science communication event, academic practice) but as there is just one didactics course offered and no teaching practice, the graduates will probably not be adequately prepared for school work.

The justification of the Master's programme in section 3.2.2. has been completed in quite general terms and needs to be specified in terms of its uniqueness. The SER justification main claim seems to be that similar programmes exist in other universities, but this rather negates than justifies its existence. Students could potentially get the degree in the contexts described in SER (p. 175 – 176), there is no need to open yet another programme at DU. There are both financial and qualification duplication concerns here.

In terms of study programme implementation methods, the SER lists lectures, seminars, practical classes, weekly consultations, online consultations, e-learning, independent research work, individual and group projects. The SER p. 176 lists numerous approaches (cognitive approach, research approach, creative approach, problem-solving approach, autonomous studies) as well as forms of work (individual, pair and group) which are inherently student-centered, promoting their idiosyncratic development.

A commendable feature in this section of the SER is that a rationale has been offered for the variety in the methodology (cf. p. 176). The choice is driven by the desire to link theoretical knowledge with critical thinking, develop learner responsibility and problem solving skills.

Internship within the programme takes up a very small proportion of the course – 1 credit point. Yet, its organization is duly determined by the respective DU regulation. The proportion of practice in the programme is very small (1 CP). Currently the aim remains too general and unspecific: ('solving specific issues, getting experience of the work of an organization, get motivation for their Master's theses, pick up ideas for further education or the choice of a specific profession'), which may be due to the nature of programme, an attempt to cover everything, language, literature, linguistics. The locations have been indicated in the SER p. 177 - DU and its structural units, state or local

government institutions, nongovernmental organisations, private companies, as well as foreign organisations represented in Latvia – but the specialization of these institutions is so varied that it is difficult to both standardize the expected outcome and evaluate it. The programme could benefit from a more focused approach in the MA programme.

The specification of the analysis and assessment of the topics of final theses needs a review: the opening paragraph does not explain the rationale for the choice of the MA theses clearly. Also, the procedure of the approval of the topics needs clarification. The number of credit points the students collect for the development and defending the thesis seems disproportionate: if the students are already getting credit points for developing the topic, the list of works to cite, the draft, etc. (Master's Thesis I, II, III and IV), it seems superfluous to award them additional points for the Masters Theses (cf. respective course programmes).

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

Overall, the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' has defined its aim and learning outcomes and devised a system of courses to reach the said aims. They are numerous, well linked to the outcomes and overall contribute to the qualification well, but notably lack any choice of self-determination for the students as there are no electives. The programme implementation is well guaranteed in terms of the variation in teaching methodology and training materials. The internship has an unjustifiably small scope and consequently a fairly insignificant effect on the students' professional development. In spite of the somewhat questionable role of the internship in the study process, graduation research and thesis defense are generally well organized.

#### **Strengths**

1. Good general coverage of the knowledge field through a wide variety of subjects is offered, there are 74 courses included in the programme from 8 different study fields.
2. Methodological variety in instruction is ensured. There is a very good justification of the methodological choices made.
3. A learner-centered approach to instruction is being implemented.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. The justification of the existence of the study programme needs improvement. The fact that there are similar programmes at other universities does not suffice. The name of the programme should reflect the qualification awarded.
2. No elective courses are offered to students.
3. Credit point allocation is ambiguous.
4. The increase of the scope of students' independent work needs clarification in terms of how it is supported from the point of view of time allocation.
5. The internship on the Master's level should guarantee a close link to the students' study and the prospective workplace. The scope of practice needs to be increased to achieve that.
6. The process of choosing and approving the topics for the Master's theses is not clear.
7. The expected compulsory reading varies widely from course to course reaching up to more than 30 mandatory entries on the list (Contemporary British and American Literature). It would be advisable to agree on the amount of independent reading required per credit point.

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

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

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

It offers a wide variety of field specific courses systematically assembled to guarantee a high level of knowledge and competences. Improvements are needed in incorporating a wider scope of practice and adjusting the amount of work needed on the part of the students to earn a credit point across the courses.

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

### **Analysis**

The resources and provision of the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' correspond to the conditions of the study programme implementation and achievement of the learning outcomes and are incorporated in overall provision for the implementation of the study field (SER, p.38.-49).

The resources of the Faculty of Humanities available to students, including the material and technical base and equipment (for preparation, combination, integration, visualisation and distribution of study and research materials), information networks (Internet, intranet, Moodle), databases (library network, databases of DU research centres, free access to databases (databases of literature resources), materials (research materials, scientific publications, archives), services (administrative, financial, IT and network support services, access to official statistics), computer applications and software provide for acquisition all study courses offered in the programme, as well as conducting research, and provide a flexible and student-centred environment.

The methodological support for the implementation of the study programme at DU is extensive and prepared in accordance with the specifics of the field of language and culture studies. In addition to traditional information sources, DU provides access to more than 100,000 subscribed e-sources in various fields of science. To expand the diversity of the study courses, new e-learning courses are being developed and introduced, and the existing methodological materials are being updated and modernized in the Moodle environment. According to the information provided in the SER (p.112), the sources of funding of the programme are state funding - state-funded budget places and students' personal funding. Continuous funding of sub-programmes with small number of students might pose the risks to the sustainability of the study programme. DU supports the implementation of studies in this programme.

The number of state-funded budget places in the study programme is 10. The tuition fee for AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' is 3200 EUR (for two years). Costs per student are calculated by the head of the Finance and Accounting Department of DU, based on the calculations on the provision of the study programme submitted by the management of study programme. The minimum number of students in two years of the study programme to ensure its profitability is 14 persons.

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

The resources, materials and provision of the study programme correspond to the conditions of its implementation and achievement of the learning outcomes.

#### **Strengths**

1. Moodle is used as an e-learning environment.
2. Good e-studies environment for on-site studies is ensured.
3. DU ensures access to subscribed databases as well as regularly purchases the necessary literature sources.

## Weaknesses

1. Specific literature sources for sub-programmes of the study programme are not mentioned in the SER, only general information on the resources is provided.

## Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

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

The resources, materials and provision of the study programme correspond to the conditions of its implementation and achievement of the learning outcomes.

## 2.4. Teaching Staff

### Analysis

The academic staff of the Department of English Philology and Translatology of the Faculty of Humanities, the Department of Latvian Literature and Culture, the Department of Latvian Language, the Department of Russian Studies and Slavic Studies, the Department of Foreign Languages, the teaching staff of the Cultural Research Centre of the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences are involved in the implementation of AMSP 'Philology and language practices'.

It is confirmed in Annex II\_2.3.7 that the official language proficiency of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the AMSP 'Philology and language practices' (programme code 45226) complies with the regulations regarding the degree of knowledge of the official language and the procedures to examine the proficiency in the official language for the performance of their professional duties. It is confirmed in Annex 2.3.7. that all academic staff teaching courses in the study programme holds at least B2 level according to the European Language Assessment levels as the study process can be implemented in foreign languages. However, in Annex 2.3.7. 'List of teaching staff', the foreign language level is indicated to be B1 (e.g., lecturer Inguna Teilāne). The recruitment of lecturers takes place in accordance with the Regulations on academic and administrative positions (SER, p. 182). The programme is implemented by six professors, five associate professors, 12 docents, and six lecturers, who have the relevant competencies to deliver the courses and ensure the qualitative implementation of the programme. There are no data provided on the visiting teaching staff who deliver the courses in the AMSP 'Philology and language practices' although information about the visiting lecturers is indicated in the SER (p.182).

During the period under assessment, the changes in the composition of teaching staff increased the qualification of the teaching staff (one obtained Doctoral degree in Philology, another finished doctoral studies). Seven lecturers are experts of the Latvian Council of Science in the field of the Humanities and Arts (Linguistics and Literary Studies), two of them are also experts of the Latvian Council of Science in the field of Social Sciences. Erasmus + mobility opportunities were actively used during the assessment period, although detailed information is not provided in the SER, and it is expected to increase the number of outgoing teaching staff. On page 183, it is noted that '... teaching staff are professionals (judges, notary lawyers, lawyers) in their field of science, who have certified their competence in research related to their field of expertise and the use of the e-environment in the study process, as well as participated in international projects and developed teaching aids and materials'. It is not clear how this is in line with the teaching staff and implementation of the study programme in the direction of 'Language and Culture Studies, Mother

The teaching staff in this programme has a high academic and professional record, as seven lecturers are experts of the Latvian Council of Science in the field of Humanities and Arts (Linguistics and Literary Studies). Some members of the teaching staff are actively involved in the publication of their research in peer review and Scopus or WoS indexed journals. It should be noted that the publications are related not only to the delivered course content but also lecturers publish their insights into various teaching/ didactics aspects. Thus, the number of publications in conference proceedings is also high (e.g., IATED, SGEM conferences). The possibility of publishing in the Faculty collections of scientific articles is used by all members of the teaching staff. A disproportion in the workload of teaching staff might be considered as the reason why teaching staff cannot involve more in research.

Teaching staff cooperates at the individual level or through the programme director. The SER (p.184) provides some examples of successful cooperation in order to improve the programme curriculum. Such cooperation results in achieving a unified understanding of current problems in the study field and gives students the opportunity to analyse the concepts from different methodological perspectives. The ratio of the number of students and teaching staff within the study programme is 1: 1, which can be risky from a long-term perspective.

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

The number of teaching staff in the study programme is sufficient, and the formal qualifications of the teachers exceed the legal requirements. From the CVs and academic activities of the teaching staff, it is obvious that the qualification of the teaching staff is adequate to ensure the goals and learning outcomes of the study programmes. In the interviews with students and graduates, it was made clear for the expert team that the students appreciated the teachers very much and that they found them to be qualified, supportive, and dedicated to teaching.

#### **Strengths**

1. Seven lecturers are experts of the Latvian Council of Science in the field of the Humanities and Arts (Linguistics and Literary Studies)
2. Academic staff have attended various professional development courses and apply the gained knowledge in their teaching practice.
3. The number of teaching staff in the study programme is sufficient, and the formal qualifications of the teachers exceed the legal requirements.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. The recruitment procedures should be available in the English language in order to increase the competition and attract international participants.
2. The SER mentioned that the members of teaching staff being professionals -judges, notary lawyers, lawyers, it is not clear how and why they belong to the teaching staff in this particular study programme.
3. The expert panel suggests providing better and more detailed information on international research proposals or projects in which teaching staff are involved, as well as increasing the international co-authorship in published papers. Finally, it would be helpful to provide more evidence about the engagement of master students in their research projects.
4. The ratio of the number of students and teaching staff within the study programme should be increased to achieve an efficient ratio.



## Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The list of academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme is included in the Annex 2.3.7 List of teaching staff. The number of professors and associate professors who are elected to academic positions in the university and participate in the implementation of the compulsory part and the limited elective part of the academic study programme exceeds the threshold stated in the law - five.

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Attached document '3.2.1. AMPS\_Compliance with State education standard.pdf' confirms that the study program partially complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 240 'Regulations on the national standard of academic education'. However, free elective study part as mandated by regulatory enactments should be included in study programme.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached study course descriptions '3.2.1AMSP\_Phylol\_Descript\_of\_study\_courses.zip' are prepared in Latvian. The descriptions comply with the regulations set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The provided diploma sample '3.1.2.AMSP\_Diploma and supplements.zip' complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to Cabinet Regulation No. 202 'Procedure for issuing state recognized documents of higher education'.

The degree to be obtained is 'Master of Arts degree in Literature and Linguistics' with a specialisation in English philology/Latvian philology/Russian philology/comparative philology. The English translation of the degree must be Master's degree in Humanities in Literature and Linguistics (in Latvian: Humanitāro zinātņu maģistra grāds literatūrā un lingvistikā).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The provided staff table in the SER 'Philology and Language Practices' 3.4.1. and the DU letter of confirmation No. 4-40/292 affirms that the academic staff of the study programme complies with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached CVs of the staff members and DU confirmation letter No. 4-40/282 verify that state language proficiency is compliant with MK. No. 733 'Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi'.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of attached study agreement '3.1.2.AMSP\_Agreement\_studies.pdf' complies with MK. Nr. 70 'Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi'.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached cooperation agreement (in '2.1.4.Agreement\_student\_takeover.zip') indicates that students will have the opportunity to continue their studies in the relevant study programmes at the University of Latvia.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

DU confirmation No. 4-40/283 states that the students are guaranteed 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 university (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The study programme mostly complies with the regulatory enactments, however, the free elective study courses are de facto limited elective courses.

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

To conclude, the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' complies with the study field. The study programme is socially justified. Overall, the AMSP has defined its aim and learning outcomes and devised a system of courses to reach the aims. They are numerous, well linked to the outcomes and overall contribute to the degree well, but notably lack any choice of self-determination for the students as there are no electives. There are no defined learning outcomes for the sub-programmes. The programme implementation is well guaranteed in terms of the variation in teaching methodology and training materials. The internship has an unjustifiably small scope and consequently a fairly insignificant effect on the students' professional development. The number of teaching staff in the study programme is sufficient, and the formal qualifications of the teachers exceed the legal requirements.

**Strengths**

1. Good general coverage of the knowledge field through a wide variety of subjects is offered.
2. Methodological variety in instruction is provided, as well as a very good justification of the methodological choices is made.

3. A learner-centered approach to instruction is ensured.
4. Seven lecturers are experts of the Latvian Council of Science in the field of the Humanities and Arts (Linguistics and Literary Studies)

#### Weaknesses

1. The number of students enrolled in the AMSP 'Philology and Language Practices' and its four subprogrammes (Latvian philology, English philology, Russian philology and comparative philology) is too small for all the sub-programmes to be feasible.
2. Wrong translation of the degree awarded - the English translation of the degree must be Master's degree in Humanities in Literature and Linguistics (in Latvian: Humanitāro zinātņu maģistra grāds literatūrā un lingvistikā).
3. The justification of the existence of the study programme needs improvement. The fact that there are similar programmes at other universities does not suffice. The name of the programme should reflect the qualification awarded.
4. Credit point allocation is ambiguous.
5. The internship on the Master's level should guarantee a close link to the students' study and the prospective workplace. The scope of the internship needs to be increased to achieve that.
6. The expected compulsory reading varies widely from course to course. It would be advisable to agree on the amount of independent reading required per credit point.
7. The recruitment procedures are not available in the English language, thus, it is impossible to attract international academic staff and increase the competition.
8. The ratio of the number of students and teaching staff within the study programme should be increased to achieve an efficient ratio.

### Evaluation of the study programme "Philology and Language Practices"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### 2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Philology and Language Practices"

#### Short-term recommendations

The name of the programme should be changed to better reflect the degree it awards.

The English translation of the degree should be Master's degree in Humanities in Literature and Linguistics (in Latvian: Humanitāro zinātņu maģistra grāds literatūrā un lingvistikā).

The scope of the internship needs to be increased to achieve a close link to the students' the prospective workplace.

Free elective courses could be offered to students.

#### Long-term recommendations

Effective marketing strategy should be created to attract possible local and international candidates for the study programme.

A clear rationale for the allocation of credit points for courses needs to be given.

Measures on balancing the workload of the staff between teaching hours and research activities should be taken.

Global performance indicators need to be provided as most of the SER is a description of how the system works but does not provide enough key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor the performance.

A clear procedure of choosing and approving of graduation theses as well as guidelines for writing them should be provided.

It is recommended that students are offered free elective courses.

## **II - "Intercultural Relations" ASSESSMENT**

### **II - "Intercultural Relations" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

The PMSP 'Intercultural relations' (programme code 47227) is implemented as a two-year full-time study programme with Latvian and English as the languages of instruction at the University of Daugavpils, Daugavpils, Vienības iela 13, LV-5401. The degree to be awarded is 'Professional Master's Degree in Intercultural Relations, and the qualification to be obtained is 'Strategic Communications Manager'. The second part of the programme code corresponds to the thematic field of education (22 - the Humanities) and the group of educational programmes (227 - Language studies and programmes). However, the compulsory courses of the study programme, e.g., "Communication theories", "Advertising and Media Law", "Theories of Public Opinion", "Public Relations", "Fundamentals and Technologies of Journalism" or levelling courses, e.g. "Fundamentals of Accounting", "Business Economics", "Sociology", "Ethnopolitics" to mention a few indicate that the programme does not refer to the humanities and to the current study field. This opinion can be substantiated by the outcomes of the programme which concern in-depth knowledge in the fields of culture, sociology, economics, political science, psychology, etc. as well as the broad admission requirements: bachelor's academic degree or second-level higher professional education in philology, history, economics, management, art, music, sociology, library science, cultural studies. It also has to be remarked that none of the bachelor study programmes submitted for accreditation awards a degree in philology. Regrettably, the graduates of the study programmes 'Eastern European Culture and Business Relations' and 'Language and Culture Studies' will not have an opportunity to continue their studies in the present programme. To cater for the likely lack of knowledge, levelling modules are included in the mandatory part of the programme (A1 - basic education in the field of economics, A2 - basic education in the field of sociology and social sciences, A3 - basic education in the field of the humanities and arts). However, it remains unclear how feasible such modules are taking into account the small number of students. The results foreseen in the programme are oriented towards building professional competence and research potential.

It has to be noted that irrelevant qualification: 'Starpkultūru attiecību menedžeris' and a wrong code 47222 are written in the study agreement in Latvian. The sample study agreement in English has not only an incorrect classification code 45226, but also an incorrect name of the study programme: 'Academic Master's study programme Philology and Language Practices'.

The corrections made to the study programme's parameters within the assessment of the study field have been analyzed and justified. The experts can support offering the programme in English (previously only in Latvian), as there has been interest about the programme from abroad. As to supplementing the studies with remote learning and a hybrid form of studies, this can be allowed if

the national legislation allows that or there is an emergency situation (e.g. the pandemic experienced previously) since the programme is to be accredited as a full-time programme implying face-to-face studies.

The significant changes are related to the awarding of the new qualification. The qualification to be obtained is the professional qualification of strategic communications manager (previously – intercultural relations manager). The professional qualification of strategic communications manager to be obtained is not within the scope of the study field "Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes" which the experts have been assigned to evaluate; therefore, the evaluation of the compliance of the content of the courses, learning outcomes, aims and objectives in relation to sociology, economics, political science, psychology, etc. with the occupational standards is beyond the competency of the experts. To the best of experts' knowledge, the title and the degree of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes are interrelated. The interdisciplinary nature of the programme can be seen as its advantage. It is claimed that the study course 'Intercultural communication' is the core of the programme, as it focuses on the qualification to be obtained (introduction to the profession). However, intercultural communication is only one out of 10 competences to be developed.

The statistics of the reporting period (cf. Annex 3.1.4.) show a decrease in the number of enrolled students and graduates. The largest number of students - 57 was observed in 2017/2018 and the smallest - 30 in the study year 2021/2022. The largest number of graduates - 21 was in the year 2018, but the smallest - 9 in 2022. The drop-out rate is 10-15%. Although the number of international students is insignificant, there has been an increased interest in the programme recently. The programme is interesting for Erasmus+ students, too.

Economic and social substantiation of the study programme and the analysis of the employment of 57 graduates have revealed that the programme graduates are employed in various spheres: education, social sphere, in the media, tourism, business, and marketing.

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

To conclude, the PMSP 'Intercultural relations' is an interdisciplinary study programme implemented as a two-year full-time study programme with Latvian and English as the languages of instruction. The degree to be awarded is 'Professional Master's Degree in Intercultural Relations, and the qualification to be obtained is 'Strategic Communications Manager'.

#### **Strengths**

- 1.The interdisciplinary nature of the programme.
- 2.The results foreseen in the programme are oriented towards building professional competence and research potential.
- 3.Economic and social justification of the study programme and employment indicators of the study programme graduates indicate that the programme has perspectives in the region.

#### **Weaknesses**

- 1.The programme does not belong to the study field "Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes". The degree to be awarded 'Professional Master's Degree in Intercultural Relations, and the qualification to be obtained 'Strategic Communication Manager' do not correspond to the thematic field of education 22 – the Humanities and the group of educational

programmes - 227 – Language studies and programmes.

2. Irrelevant qualification and a wrong code are written in the sample study agreement in Latvian.

3. The sample study agreement in English has an incorrect classification code and an incorrect name of the study programme.

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

### **Analysis**

The PMSP 'Intercultural Relations' attempts to provide a concise approach to achieving the qualification of Strategic Communications Manager, Professional Master's Degree in Intercultural Relations. First off, there seems to be a discrepancy between the name of the programme - Intercultural Relations, and the qualification offered - Strategic Communications Manager. There is a distinct emphasis on communication rather than the specifics of interculturality.

There seems to be a partial compliance with the regulations, as the SER states that there are the following categories of courses included in the programme: mandatory courses, the latest developments in theory and practice (Part A) – 20 CP, mandatory electives 14 CP, professional practice – 26 CP, Master's Thesis – 20 CP, Elective courses – 4 CP (from the offered 6 CP courses, students choose two courses for 4 CP). Although the elective courses are available, the mandatory courses seem to make the elective courses unnecessary as the 80 CP needed for the degree can be earned without them. The programme has been set out to include five types of courses (SER p. 77) to meet the curricular goals: mandatory, research-related courses, courses aimed at professional competence, professional practice, Master's Thesis and elective courses. This division seems to imply that there are certain core courses that are compulsory (Part A) and the rest are not. The term 'mandatory' is misleading, however, as all the courses listed are necessary to obtain the 120 ETCS. And though the elective courses seem to be available – they are mentioned as a category on page 77 of the SER, but not elaborated – their essence is not clear. Instead the programme outlines the category of 'mandatory electives' (p.78), which are in essence also mandatory courses. Focus on the communication and media rather than intercultural relations is sustained in the list of 38 courses offered: of all the 24 content courses listed in annex 3.2.1, just six seem to focus on the issues of culture, the rest provide information on a wide variety of topics ranging from journalism, media, business, accounting, management, to name but a few. The mapping of the courses to the course outcomes shows a fairly loose connection between the courses offered and the particular course outcomes. As the programme focuses so strongly on communication, a question arises about its place in the study field of 'Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies and Language Programmes.

The DU aspiration to train Master's level specialists in international relations is fully justified in the current geopolitical situation (the war in the Ukraine, the constraints of the pandemic, influx of refugees, the distribution of different nationalities within Latvia).

The study process is described on pp. 77 – 79 of the SER. In terms of study programme implementation methods, the SER lists lectures, seminars and individual work as the three main methodological approaches. The review of individual study programs shows that besides the above the faculty use individual and group projects, graded tests, writing of proposals, observation tasks, reports on independent reading and presentations to promote learner-centeredness during studies. The e-environment Moodle has been chosen as the predominant virtual study environment allowing a variety of means for materials distribution, lectures, group and individual work as well as assessment. Besides Moodle, Zoom is used for both lectures and consultations. Discussion with students and staff demonstrated that in spite of the initial challenges, both Moodle and Zoom are

currently actively employed to meet study goals.

The internship within the study program takes up 26 credit points and is distributed between the first three terms, increasing in scope in each term. The internship is managed by the DU finding and recommending the respective institutions to the students. The university practice manager seems to have a long tradition of managing the network of internship location. The observation practice focuses on national cultural societies and is thus closely connected to the intended goals of the study programme. Practice 1 focuses on media institutions and the connection to the program less clear. Practice 2 is focused on intercultural relations but the course description too general to allow any conclusions about its connection to the intended goal. While the internship for home students has been developed in good detail, linking the objectives of the study practice to the specific practices and the criteria for assessment, the internship for foreign students seems to be dependent on the availability of the respective language environments, or restricted to the work in Internet portals. The programme should consider organizing practice in tandems where the home student is paired with a foreign student for mutual language and content benefit.

The topics of the Master's Theses are formulated on the basis of the principles specified on p. 85 of the SER. The listed topics are relevant and linked to students' practical activities. It is commendable that Master's theses development and defence is close related to cooperation with employees. It would have been useful to learn about the success rate of the theses defended, i.e., grades awarded, instances and reasons for failure.

The main field of study for the qualification is the humanities. Thus, the learning outcomes as well as the mandatory and the restrictive elective courses of the programme have to comprise the fundamentals, principles, methodology, history and topical problems of the relevant branch of science in the humanities. The code of the study programme (227) according the Latvian Education Classification (in compliance with code 231 of the 'International Standard Classification of Education') indicates that the programme has to focus on language acquisition and the study of related cultures, literature, linguistics and phonetics. Moreover, there is none learning outcome relating to the study field 'Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes'. Therefore, the PMSP 'Intercultural Relations' has to be referred to another study field in the social sciences.

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

Overall, the study programme focuses on communication and media rather than intercultural relations which the Master's Degree in Intercultural Relations seems to presuppose. The mapping of the courses displays a loose connection between the courses offered and the outcomes listed for the programme. The methodological basis for the implementation of the courses offered is sound and makes good use of both virtual and contact learning modes. The internship has two focal points and is conducted based on the regulations of DU. The current geopolitical situation, although justifying the study field, poses a serious challenge in the internship content management.

#### **Strengths**

1. There is a strong emphasis on the organization and management of the internship.
2. Methodological variety in teaching is present.
3. There is definite aspiration towards learner-centeredness.
4. There is close cooperation with employees during degree-work.



#### Weaknesses

1. Unclear connection between the programme name and its content.
2. A small proportion of culture-related courses in the programme.
3. The presence of courses that seem to contribute loosely to meeting the programme goals (cf. mapping of courses annex).
4. The content of the study programme does not meet all the requirements of the qualification to be obtained: 'Strategic Communications Manager'.

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

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

#### **Assessment of compliance:** Non-compliant

It offers a wide variety of field specific courses assembled to guarantee a high level of knowledge and competences but the connection to the degree (Professional Master Degree in Intercultural Relations) and qualification (Strategic Communications Manager) is loose at best. In fact, the fields of sociology, economics, political science, psychology are dominant in the current study plan. Improvements are needed focusing on the courses to the aspired degree and qualification, adding culture-related content and adjusting the amount of work needed on the part of the students to earn a credit point across the courses.

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

#### **Analysis**

The resources and provision of the PMSP 'Intercultural Relations' correspond to the conditions of the study programme implementation and achievement of the learning outcomes and are incorporated in overall provision for the implementation of the study field (SER, p.38.-49).

The resources of the Faculty of Humanities available to students, including the material and technical base and equipment (for preparation, combination, integration, visualisation and distribution of study and research materials), information networks (Internet, intranet, Moodle), databases (library network, databases of DU research centres, free access to databases (databases of literature resources), materials (research materials, scientific publications, archives), services (administrative, financial, IT and network support services, access to official statistics), computer applications and software provide for acquisition all study courses offered in the programme, as well as conducting research, and provide a flexible and student-centred environment.

It is claimed in the SER that the methodological support for the implementation of the study programme at DU is extensive and prepared in accordance with the specifics of the field of language and culture studies, however, during the onsite visit the expert panel was familiarised with the field-related sources but not with the study literature in Latvian and English relevant for this particular study programme (e.g., Advertising, Public relations, Accounting, Ethnopolitics). In addition to traditional information sources, DU provides access to more than 100,000 subscribed e-sources in various fields of science. To expand the diversity of the study courses, new e-learning courses are being developed and introduced, and the existing methodological materials are being updated and 60 modernized in the Moodle environment.

According to the information provided in the SER (p.87), the sources of funding of the programme

are state funding - state-funded budget places and students' personal funding. Continuous funding of programme with small number of students might pose the risks to the sustainability of the study programme. DU supports the implementation of studies in this programme.

The number of state-funded budget places in the study programme is 32. The tuition fee for PMSP 'Intercultural Relations' is 3200 EUR (for two years). Costs per student are calculated by the head of the Finance and Accounting Department of DU, based on the calculations on the provision of the study programme submitted by the management of study programme. The minimum number of students in two years of the study programme to ensure its profitability is 18 persons for studies in Latvian and 10 persons for studies in English.

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

The resources, materials and provision of the study programme correspond to the conditions of its implementation and achievement of the learning outcomes.

#### **Strengths**

1. Moodle is used as an e-learning environment.
2. Good e-studies environment for on-site studies is ensured.
3. DU ensures access to the subscribed databases as well as regularly purchases the necessary literature sources.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. Specific literature sources for the programme should be made available not only in English but also in Latvian.

### **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

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

The resources, materials and provision of the study programme correspond to the conditions of its implementation and achievement of the learning outcomes.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

Teaching staff from the Department of Russistics and Slavic Studies, Department of Latvian Literature and Culture, Department of History, Department of Foreign Languages (Faculty of the Humanities), Department of Economics and Sociology, Department of Law (Faculty of Social Sciences), Department of Pedagogy and Pedagogical Psychology (Education and Management faculty), Center for Cultural Studies of the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences are involved in the implementation of the PMSP 'Intercultural relations'.

The recruitment process is in accordance with the regulations on academic and administrative positions. The language competences of the teaching staff are ensured by the documents supplied together with SER (Annexes 2.3.7., II\_2.3.7.). The programme employs 3 professors, 3 associate professors, 6 docents, 2 lecturers, and 1 researcher. Visiting lecturers take part in the implementation

of modules more related to other study directions than the study direction under assessment.

The composition of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme has been stable in the period under assessment, making the academic staff a close-knit team. The employment of assistant professor Olesja Nikitina in the Department of Russistics and Slavic studies allows to strengthen the analysis of current practical problems in the course of Ethnopolitics. Other cases of change in teaching staff are not related to the study field under evaluation.

It is mentioned in the SER (p. 52) that the PMSP 'Intercultural relations' employs one of the leading methodologies of the direction, the structural-semiotic school in the interdisciplinary applied research, which could be considered as uniqueness of this programme. Successful involvement of professionals into the study programme (assistant professor O. Nikitina) allows one to deliver and analyse up-to-date problems as well as present the findings in the research. The members of the teaching staff have published their research in scientific journals, conference proceedings on national and international levels during the period under evaluation, thus meeting the formal requirements. The SER provides insufficient data about the teaching staff employed in the study programme international mobility for teaching.

The teaching staff cooperates with each other both in the development of the programme and in its implementation. The exchange of information among the teaching staff takes place through the programme director as due to the interdisciplinary nature of the programme, the teaching staff work in different structural units. Such a model of cooperation allows DU to ensure quality aspects in the delivery of courses, diminishing the risk of content overlapping and highlighting the cross-cutting topics that contribute to the achievement of the study programme results.

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

The academic staff in this study programme possess the necessary qualifications and competencies for their teaching. The University offers teaching staff good opportunities for interdisciplinary cooperation with the other study fields of the University.

#### **Strengths**

1. The university's multidisciplinary environment provides good possibilities for teachers' collaboration across study fields.
2. The structural-semiotic direction as the leading methodology in the interdisciplinary applied research could be considered as the uniqueness of this PMSP.
3. Academic staff have attended various professional development courses and apply the gained knowledge in their teaching practice.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. The enhancement of competences of academic staff could be developed through launching of special programs for inviting leading researchers and professors, guest specialists from business and abroad.
2. Although the academic staff shows engagement into academic mobility, this is an area that needs to be improved.
3. The expert panel suggests providing better and more detailed information on international research proposals or projects in which the teaching staff are involved, as well as increasing the international co-authorship in published papers.

### **Assessment of the requirement [7]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The list of academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme is included in Annex 2.3.7 List of teaching staff. The number of professors and associate professors who are elected to academic positions in the university and participate in the implementation of the compulsory part and the limited elective part of the professional master's study programme exceed the threshold stated in the law - five.

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached document '3.2.1.Compliance of the MPSP Intercultural Relations with the national education standard.pdf' confirms that the study programme complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 512 'Regulations on the state standard of second-level professional higher education'.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Non-compliant

Awarded qualification does not comply with study field as qualification by its content is not natural part of study field 'Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes' and should be instead included in study fields related to communication or management.

The attached course mapping '3.2.1.Compliance of the PMSP Intercultural Relations with the professional standards.pdf' indicates that the study programme does not comply with the requirements set forth by the professional standard of Strategic Communications Manager, as key elements are missing in the study programme, such as communication planning and management, risk assessment and crisis communication, human resource and financial management and so on. For example, professional standard criteria 3.2. Organisational Communication Planning and Management is not mapped withing programme content at all, same goes for 3.5 Human Resources, 3.6 Public Relation Analysis and Evaluation.

However, these qualifications are beyond the scope the chosen study field and cursory glance does not persuade that management skills, competencies and knowledge are properly accounted for within the study programme content.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached study course descriptions

'3.2.1.ABSP\_Language\_and\_cult\_st\_Description\_Study\_Courses.zip' are prepared in Latvian and English. The descriptions comply with the regulations set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The provided diploma sample

'3.1.2.PMSP\_Intercultural\_relations\_Diploma\_and\_supplement\_sample.zip' complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to Cabinet Regulation No. 202 'Procedure for issuing state recognized documents of higher education'.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached CVs of staff members and DU confirmation letter No. 4-40/282 verifies that their state language proficiency is compliant with MK. No. 733 'Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi'.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached CVs of staff members and DU confirmation letter 4-40/281 verifies that their language proficiency in English is at least B2.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the attached study agreement '3.1.2.AMSP\_Agreement\_studies.pdf' complies with MK No. 70 'Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi'. However there are technical issues - irrelevant qualification, incorrect name and a wrong code are written in the study agreement in Latvian.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The attached cooperation agreement indicates that the students will have the opportunity to continue studies in the professional master's study programme 'Strategic Intercultural Communication' in Ventspils University of Applied Sciences.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

DU confirmation No. 4-40/283 states that the students are guaranteed 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 college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The study programme is only partially compliant with the regulatory enactments. It does not fully comply with professional standard requirements as many key competencies are not covered by the study programme. The study plan of the programme comprises Part A and Part B but not Part C or free elective courses as mandated by Section 55 of the 'Law on Higher Education Institutions'.

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

## **and weaknesses of the study programme**

Overall, the study programme focuses on communication and media rather than intercultural relations which the Master's Degree in Intercultural Relations seems to presuppose. The mapping of the courses displays a loose connection between the courses offered and the outcomes listed for the programme.

### **Strengths**

- 1.The interdisciplinary nature of the programme.
- 2.The results foreseen in the programme are oriented towards building professional competence and research potential.
- 3.Economic and social justification of the study programme and employment indicators of the study programme graduates indicate that the programme has perspectives in the region.

### **Weaknesses**

- 1.The programme does not belong to the current study field Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes. The degree to be awarded Professional Master's degree in Intercultural Relations and the qualification to be obtained Strategic Communication Manager do not correspond to the thematic field of Humanities (22) and the group of educational programmes Language Studies and Programmes (227).
2. Irrelevant qualification and a wrong code are written in the sample study agreement in Latvian.
- 3.The sample study agreement in English has an incorrect classification code and an incorrect name of the study programme.
4. There is unclear connection between the name of the programme and its curriculum, as there is a small proportion of culture-related courses in the programme.
5. The presence of courses that seem to contribute loosely to meeting the programme goals (cf. mapping of courses Annex 3.2.1).

## **Evaluation of the study programme "Intercultural Relations"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

## **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Intercultural Relations"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

The programme should be reassigned to a more relevant study field in Social Sciences as currently it does not belong to the study field Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes.

In case the programme management insists on leaving the programme in the study field Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes, the degree to be awarded has to be aligned with the field of Humanities (22) and the group of educational programmes Language Studies and Programmes (227). Currently, there is unclear connection between the name of the programme and its curriculum and the courses contribute loosely to meeting the programme outcomes.

### **Long-term recommendations**

Global performance indicators need to be provided. Most of the SER is a description of how the system works but does not provide enough key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor the performance.

Measures on balancing the workload of the staff between teaching hours and research activities should be taken.

The justification of each course towards the course outcomes needs to be reviewed.

A rationale for the allocation of credit points for the courses needs to be established.

The balance of the study load should be re-evaluated including the scope of independent studies and adjusted to be manageable and equally distributed in the programme courses.

A clear procedure for the selection of the topics of graduation theses, their approval as well as clear guidelines for their writing need to be provided.

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

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

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

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:		Partially compliant	DU has established a quality management system in compliance with ISO 9001:2017 quality standard. The quality management system aims at ensuring continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field. The lack of apparent key performance indicators makes it hard to track overall success of implemented activities and how well DU goals are achieved.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)		Partially compliant	The DU and the study field management have developed mechanisms and tools for the participation of teaching staff in scientific research. Scientific research and the results thereof have integration links with the study programmes. The research excellence of the faculty can be improved. The teaching load needs to be considerably reduced to allow for time and energy for research.



Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.	Fully compliant			The university acknowledges the importance of cooperation and internationalisation as a key factor of its effective functioning. Concrete mechanisms for attracting students and faculty mobility as well as cooperation between DU and its partners exist (although could be more clearly specified/exemplified). Overall, the experts indicate, that the DU study field documents and interview results testifies to an adequate level of cooperation and internationalization.
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.	Fully compliant			Allmost all recommendations of experts given in the previous accreditation of the study field during the previous assessment period were taken into account and are considered as completed. Some recommendations from the previous assessment are in process and recommended to continue on a regular basis.

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

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Language and Culture Studies (43226)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good
2	Eastern European Culture and Business Relations (43227)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Average

<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	Philology and Language Practices (45226)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good
4	Intercultural Relations (47227)	Non-compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Average

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

N/A