

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Agency of the University of Latvia "Riga First Medical College of the University of Latvia"

Study field: Health Care

Experts:

1. Kristaps Circenis (Chair of the Experts Group)
2. Andy Gibbs (Secretary of the Experts Group)
3. Jurgita Andruskiene
4. Anna Bulajeva (Employers' Confederation of Latvia)
5. Marta Viluma (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**

Overall, the expert group has a quite good impression of the college, with no serious concerns but a number of areas that can be improved.

The aims of the study field are clearly defined and attainable, the study field and the relevant study programs comply with the main directions of the strategic development of the college and meet the needs of the society and national economy, they are designed according to National regulations. We are not fully aware of interconnection among study programs in the study field.

At the same time, allocation of responsibilities for management of the study field is not clear.

Students were happy with their studies, teachers that worked hard to offer a good learning experience and good quality resources and facilities. All of these provide a great foundation for learning professional practice.

Students were satisfied with the qualification and experience of the teachers; they confirmed the teachers are collaborative and wishing to share their experience with them.

Students gave some examples how they provided their feedback, and the teachers implemented their recommendations, it led to the greater possibilities to achieve the learning outcomes.

Students are aware of the support they can get from the College and they get all the answers from the study director to all their questions.

Students are getting the feedback about their study progress from teachers, which are commenting the assessments or exam results.

Students are not actively involved in mobilities. It can be due to various reasons such as work, family but it is a recommendation for college to find ways of mobility training, cooperation partners that may provide internships abroad or seminars, and youth exchanges that are no longer than 2 weeks.

College provides a strong technical base regarding technical equipment, study facilities for practical skill gaining as emergency room and car, mannequins for training skills. The College demonstrated a wide variety of the equipment used for the achievement of the study results on the tour of the facilities. The teachers and the students confirmed that nothing is missing in the provision of the resources for implementation of the study programmes.

The academic staff confirmed the sufficient support by the teaching/learning equipment during the pandemic times.

Use of English literature sources is not sufficient (that impression came from the meetings with students and the academic staff members). English language proficiency level of the teachers is not tested regularly, the College has no English language proficiency monitoring system.

The College has offered opportunities for teachers to attend programmes to develop their English skills, it is left to teachers' individual decision.

The use of Moodle system is not mandatory, it is the teacher's choice matter. But it was marked, that it will be fully operational next academic year.

Participation in the scientific research activities is based on the mandatory requirements in the job descriptions of the academic staff. Scientific research performance by the academic staff at the College was mainly explained by the supervising the qualification papers of the students and participating in the annual scientific conference organized by the College.

Some teachers are acquainted with the volume of the scientific production necessary to publish during the certain time period. However, there are no clear criteria for the overall quality assessment of the scientific research results achieved in the study field.

Some graduates provided the positive feedback about the competences they gained while studying, however they expressed the wish to participate in the feedback surveys and share their experience (from the career perspective) about the possible improvements in the study programmes.

The graduates were described by the social partners as very initiative, interested in continuous education, well prepared, capable of working with innovations, demonstrating excellent digital skills. The College could further develop a functioning internal quality assurance system. One example - surveys after study courses which monitor the quality of that specific course.

Effective anti-plagiarism tools and effective procedure for academic integrity must be developed as soon as possible.

The expert group notes that the College is seeking to further improve its internal quality assurance processes and expressed some ideas about how it would operate in the future.

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

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

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

##### **Analysis**

1.1.1. The aims of the study field are seen as clearly defined and attainable. As it has been stated within the SAR p. 17, the The UL Riga First Medical College set 3 main general aims that they wish to fulfill within their study field. These aims are: 1. To ensure good quality of studies within the first level professional higher education in the specific offered study programmes of the College which are the following - "Nursing", "Pharmacy" and "Medicine" ( with two possible qualifications "midwife" and "physician assistant"). 2. To train and prepare professionals who are skilled to and competent to work later on after graduation within the work market and so that their competencies and knowledge are according to the European standards. 3. To promote professional development and ensure that students after the graduation are skilled enough to pursue further studies in any other higher education institution of their choice. Overall, the College tries to make sure that the study process is oriented mainly towards development of practical skills that are very closely combined with theoretical knowledge basis acquired beforehand. For first level professional higher education that is a fundamental precondition as it concentrates on practical skill gaining early on within the study process as internships. As indicated by the College, a large number of students after their first year internship enter the work market for the purpose of continuing to develop their skills and ensure financial income as well.

LU RFMC is currently working on a new development strategy for the six year time period of 2021-2027. The previous development strategy for the time period of 2015-2020 is provided in SAR p. 18 in both Latvian and English and can be accessed here: <https://www.rmkl.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Strategy-of-Riga-1st-Medical-College-of-the-University-of-Latvia.pdf>. According to the aims and objectives set within this previous development strategy, it can be stated that strategic development of the College meets the needs and the development trends of the society and national economy. As their goal the LU RFMC has set to work on training professional specialists in such professions as midwife, medical assistant, nurse, pharmacist assistant, nursing assistant, patient carer in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, professional standards and European Union directives. The College pays close attention to cooperating with various health care institutions in order to provide internships for the students as well as try to work closely with possible future employers to make sure that students acquire the necessary skills for the work market. During the onsite visit, an expert team interviewed students and they stated that they have no problems finding a workplace and that they have possibilities to choose where they wish to work as there is an existing high demand for health care professionals right now, especially during Covid time.

What regards the new strategy of the College for the period of 2021-2027 that is under development right now, College stated within the onsite visit and indicated also in the SAR pp. 16-17, that it is developed in accordance with guidelines of ESG as well as according to development priorities set

within Osnabruck Declaration which are: quality, sustainability, lifelong learning, digitalisation, the development of professional education over the international scope.

During the onsite visit meeting the management of the study field, the expert team did not clearly get an answer regarding the interconnection of the study programmes included in the study field, thus, the expert team cannot indicate the interconnection as logical or clearly stated. It has not been indicated or described also within the SAR provided by the LU RFMC that can be referenced to.

1.1.2. In terms of SWOT analysis, it can be stated that the College has identified and analyzed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the study field and integrated them into development planning documents. The full document of SWOT analysis is available in Annex 21 which is available under "Other Annexes" on AKA platform. To mention a few strengths, the College has more than 100 years of experience in training health care professionals which gives a good basis of skills, prestige and provision of the teaching staff within the study field of "health care". Other strengths indicated are positive dynamics of student numbers as the students are interested to choose the College as their first step towards professional higher education; meeting the demands of the labor market and national economy taking into consideration recommendations from employers and graduates of the College.

Regarding the weaknesses, the College is well-aware of its lack of funding for scientific research purposes. Also, during onsite visit, teaching staff indicated that such a problem exists which is reasonable from the perspective that for college level there are different demands towards scientific work than on university level. Although, the expert team agrees that it is a problem if the scientific research is in a very low level, thus, some sort of solution has to be found on how to improve the existing situation. Other weaknesses are the small number of doctoral qualifications of the teaching staff as well as low and demotivating remuneration in Latvian health care."

LU RFMC has various opportunities to develop in the future especially due to its close cooperation with University of Latvia and being its agency, which can help to increase the variation of ways to expand the College's capabilities, skills and provision of various resources. For example, to develop the e-environment to a more advanced level, include and follow all the latest requirements of e-learning. During onsite visit, experts noticed that some significant development is needed in this regard as Moodle is implemented but not everything is implemented within the system as for example the grades are not accessible there. Grades of the students are on E-klase which requests students to navigate between these two platforms right now. Another opportunity how the College could expand themselves is through involvement of foreign guest lecturers within the study process, develop English language skills of the academic staff and provide courses in English which would attract foreign students to the College as well.

Addressing the possible threats, one of the biggest ones are the declining demographics of Latvia, which leads to the decrease in the number of secondary school graduates; lack of motivation for teaching staff to commence or continue doctoral studies caused by the existing doctoral mode and low level of state funding of education and science.

1.1.3. The management structure of the study field is described in very detail within the SAR p.7., but in the meeting with management of the study field experts received contradictory information which raised various questions of the trustability of the provided information. For example, there is a scheme seen within the SAR p. 21, regarding management structure and process while in reality during the meeting, management of the study field explained that there is a different system and different positions, so it is hard for the experts to comment on the existence and the real basis of information.

It was not clearly explained how the corresponding study programs are oriented towards the development of the study field and decision-making processes either. What is clear regarding the decision-making procedure, students are rather actively involved within the decision making as it

has been indicated by the students within the onsite visit and has been in detail explained within the SAR p.8. The Student Self-government representatives are involved into various bodies of the College as Ethics Commission and the Council of the LU RFMC.

Regarding the administrative and technical staff ensuring the needs of the study programmes and their compliance with the study field, there are various departments and people involved within the system and its processes. For example, the Administration Department which is in charge of the promotion of the study direction and study programs, also coordinates scientific activities, organizes international projects as ERASMUS+ and Nordplus. Representatives of College students are involved on all of the levels within the College processes both in terms of study programmes and study field for the purpose of objectivity and improvements where necessary. Heads of all of the study programmes ensure the compliance of the study programmes with the study field together with other members of the College. Departments of the College work on cooperation activities with the employers, improvement of the study direction and ensure the process is in terms of the goals and aims of the College in the long term as stated within the SAR p.22. It was clearly marked from the teaching staff and students, that the support provided by the technical staff ensures all the needs of the study programs corresponding to the study field which was indicated within the onsite visit meeting students and teaching staff.

1.1.4. LU RFMC has set up a system and procedure for the purpose of admission of the students as well as for the recognition of the study period, professional experience, prior formal and non-formal education and for the assessment of students' achievements and learning outcomes. This system has been developed in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 505 of 14 August 2018 "Regulations on Recognition of Competences Acquired Outside Formal Education or through Professional Experience and Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Education". According to the SAR p.25, a person has the right to apply to LU RFMC with an application on recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside formal education or through professional experience, and the learning outcomes achieved in previous education. The College provided an example regarding a person who wished to enroll in the study programme "Medicine" with the qualification of a physician assistant. This person requested that the learning outcomes achieved in his professional experience be equated to the study courses "E-health" and "Outpatient Care". At the end, the College organized an examination of the person and with a decision by the Study Result Recognition Commission recognized the courses. Thus, it can also be stated that the system is logical and effectively working. During an onsite visit with teaching staff, management, it became clear that all of the involved parties are well-aware of the existing system in place.

1.1.5. There are various forms of methods, principles and processes for assessing students' achievements. First and for all, it is of importance to outline a few of the key regulatory enactments that both externally and internally regulate the students' achievements. Externally, those are Education Law and Law on Higher Education Institutions. Internally, there are quite many but to mention a few - LU RFMC Regulation on the Study and Examination Procedures and LU RFMC Internship Regulation.

According to the SAR p. 28, before every course students are informed of the structure of the course, content, requirements and what is expected from the students during the course. For the purpose of variety, the College makes sure that there are various forms of student assessments so that student skills are developed and tested in different ways, for example in the form of essays, tests and group works. Theoretical knowledge also can be tested not only in a written form but also orally, combined or computer- based. Students have passed the course if they have received a passing grade - 4 which stands for "almost satisfactory". A crucial part of the first level professional higher education is internship. There is a developed system of assessment which shows student achievement and students are graded with "passed" or "failed" at the end of the internship. The internship outcome and grade is dependent on the supervisor of the internship.

The relevance of assessment methods and procedures for achieving the aims of study programmes

and the needs of students is analyzed regularly through satisfaction of the students with the existing system in a form of surveys.

1.1.6. The College has developed and established the principles of academic integrity and mechanisms for their observance. They have been outlined within a document developed by the College named the Regulation on Academic Integrity and is available in Latvian here: <https://www.rmk1.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Noteikumi-par-akademisko-godigumu.pdf>. However, the expert team supposes that the anti-plagiarism system established is not effective and does not work. During onsite visit and in the SAR p. 31, the College indicated that they use [www plag.lv](http://www plag.lv) as a tool to check plagiarism within the papers of students but only to final papers not all of the essays or papers the students write. They stated that students can check the plagiarism themselves and the access to the webpage is for free but it is not a sufficient and effective way to ensure academic honesty. This aspect has to be seriously reconsidered. Students and teachers are well -aware of the existing system, although it does not provide academic honesty in its core. In fact, it also has to be noted that the College has a very limited amount of guidelines regarding the referencing of final papers. It is not sufficient to mention one example and suppose it can be applied equally to any webpage, article or scientific paper referencing.

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

Overall, the College has managed to establish a rather effective management system and operates within the legislative framework of the Republic of Latvia. The goals of the study field are clearly defined and achievable. The study field and the corresponding study programs correspond to the strategic development directions of the LU RFMC, the needs of society and economic development. The College applies various forms of student assessment within the study process. Students are actively involved in the various student bodies. Although, it was not clearly explained how the corresponding study programs are oriented towards the development of the study field and decision-making processes and the management structure of the College is still unclear too. There is an existing academic honesty regulation but the anti-plagiarism system is seen as ineffective which has to be eliminated.

Strengths:

1. Operates within the legislative framework;
2. Rich history and traditions in health care education, strong links with employers;
3. Students are actively involved in various College bodies;
4. Various forms of student assessment are applied;
5. Clear goals and aims that want to be achieved in the next few years.

Weaknesses:

1. Unclear structure of the management;
2. Unclear decision -making process;
3. Absence of effective anti-plagiarism tools;
4. Lack of guidelines regarding footnotes.
5. Lack of involvement of the academic staff in research activities.

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

### **Analysis**

1.2.1. The UL Riga First Medical College has a quality policy which is divided in two parts: Quality

Manual and Study Quality Manual. Both documents are publicly available for access in Latvian language which is the language of implementation of studies in the college. The Quality Manual is available here in pdf format: <https://www.rmkl.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/LU-R1MK-Kvalitates-rokasgramata-.pdf> while the Study Quality Manual is available for access here in pdf format: <https://www.rmkl.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/LU-RIGAS-1.MEDICINAS-KOLEDZAS-STUDIJU-KVALITATES-ROKASGRAMATA.pdf>.

The maintenance and development of the quality assurance system within the college it is not clearly defined and understandable. During onsite visits, representatives of the college could not clearly describe what tools are used and the frequency of application in maintaining the quality assurance system. For example, during the meeting with the management, it was stated that questionnaires of students are completed after every study course to evaluate what should be improved in the study course, whilst during meeting with the students they indicated that questionnaires and surveys are sent to them once in quarter of semester and furthermore while meeting with study programs' representatives the expert panel was informed that the surveys are conducted once in a semester. Whilst it is clear that students do receive some sort of surveys it is still not clear how often the surveys are conducted. The college was asked to provide additional information such as examples of surveys and their questions such information was provided and examples were sent to the expert team. No examples of graduate surveys were provided. It can be stated that there is some sort of quality assurance system it needs greater clarity and consistency in implementation and additionally staff and students be able to understand and describe how they can influence quality. As far as it was able to identify from the students, they provide feedback of their study content and what they did like and did not like after the lectures and lecturers listen to their advice and are open- minded to suggestions.

Section 1.6 discusses previous recommendations and highlights that continuous improvement would be more demonstrable by using an outcomes-based approach to measure and monitor improvements. For example, students reported that their learning was limited by some teachers not learning how to use the Moodle system, discussions with teachers revealed that there were opportunities to learn how to use the system and it was the choice of each teacher whether they did so. Similarly, the development of English language skills by teachers is limited. Although the College offers opportunities for teachers to attend programmes to develop their skills, it is left to teachers individual decision. The panel urges that the College move quickly to an outcomes-based approach with clear, measurable aims and goals. This would promote a clear focus, aid decision making and evidence improvements

1.2.2. According to the SAR p.34, the college has set up various requirements for the development and updating of the study programs. The college has also outlined its procedures in place for approval of new study programs and in case of development and improvement of study courses which are available here <https://www.rmkl.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Nolikums-par-studiju-kursu-izstradi.pdf>.

The College also conducts annual self-assessment of the study field and its study programs. Such procedure takes place once in a year. As stated by the SAR p. 36, it is the time when mostly the study courses are substantially reviewed, the existing feedback received from all of the groups - students, graduates and employers. The experts team noted during the site visit, that some of the books that are used in course materials are old and date back to year of 1985. This raises a concern whether students are provided with the newest information regarding the study content or an outdated one. In such a case, more of the courses have to be reviewed and improved also regarding the mandatory literature that is provided to the students as part of the study material.

During onsite visits, experts asked students, employers and graduates about the feedback mechanism in place and whether they are informed about the results of the questionnaires or surveys that they have conducted and filled. None of the groups questioned could provide a clear

answer. It seems that they are unaware of such procedures in place and that it is a part of the quality assurance mechanism. It is of importance that in the future such a mechanism is established as a part of quality assurance.

1.2.3. During onsite visits, students indicated that they are well-aware of the complaint system in place and they know where and how their complaints and proposals can be submitted. Although, none of the students' present has ever used such an opportunity thus, they were not able to comment on the feedback mechanism in place formally. As previously mentioned, students provide an individual feedback to lecturers after lectures and they see if something gets changed in the next lectures or the advice is taken into consideration in the future. As indicated in the SAR p.37, students have the right to submit proposals and complaints about the implementation of the study process, including the assessment of examinations and thesis. The college has special procedure in place regarding submission of student complaints and proposals called "Procedure for Submission and Review of Student Proposals and Complaints" which is available for access here in Latvian: <https://www.rmkl.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Studejoso-priekslikumu-un-sudzibu-iesniegšanas-un-izskatšanas-kartiba.pdf>

1.2.4. The statistical data collection mechanism established by the college is seen as effective. The college acts according to the existing regulations as Cabinet of Ministers Regulations regarding information system, accounting procedures and others. According to the SAR p. 40, for the purpose of gathering various sorts of data, the college uses internal electronic databases and the WinStudents program to compile statistical data (lists of students and lecturers, entering grades/assessment results, creating diploma supplements, etc.). As previously mentioned in 1.2.1, the information regarding time frame and regularity of surveys is not clear. The SAR p.41. indicates that various forms of surveys are conducted but no group that was met indicated the existence of such surveys nor examples of such surveys were provided to the experts' team which raises a concern. For sure, an expert team can state that an employer survey is in place, a study internship survey and study course survey which according to the SAR. p. 41 is conducted every semester. There is unclarity regarding teaching staff surveys, graduate surveys, the last and first year student surveys as well as surveys on students intending to drop out of the college or those who have already dropped out of the college.

1.2.5. On the website of the college which is available here: <https://www.rmkl.lv/lv/> is accessible all the necessary information regarding the study programs for the future students. As indicated by the SAR p. 42, the target audience of the website is the current and future students, teaching staff, employees, cooperation partners and the general public. The website is intended for making the information about the college available to the public and for storing it, thus, providing an opportunity for its visitors to learn about the college's activities, study programs, regulatory documents, current events and communication opportunities. As the only language of study programs' implementation is Latvian, the needed information is accessible in Latvian and the requirement is fulfilled.

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

There is an existing quality assurance system in place but it is not clearly understandable and organized. There is a quantity of information that has been provided within the SAR but in reality when asked for specific examples or information regarding the surveys and materials, the amount explained and clarified was limited and with various different answers. Although there were and still are some clarifications missing, it is seen that there is a close relationship between students and lecturers which helps to maintain some feedback eye to eye despite the lacking system of quality assurance in place. There is an effective complaint and proposal system in place as well as a well-functioning and active website of the college. It can be concluded that student feedback is taken into consideration and improvements to the study programme are introduced but this is not



undertaken as part of a systematic quality assurance process, which monitors and measures progress within a quality cycle, using an outcomes based quality improvement approach with SMART objectives or similar. This is further mentioned in section 1.6. Although policies exist, they are not implemented consistently and not comprehensively understood by staff. The current arrangement does not ensure balanced resource distribution as evidenced by the outdated library stock. The experts team heard that the College is developing the internal quality assurance system. The experts panel welcomes this and urges the college to move on with implementation as soon as possible. The operation of the existing system and proposals to develop this was explained by a consultant who had been engaged by the College to introduce improvements. The panel strongly encourages the college to promote individual ownership of the system by its employees with clear lines of accountability and responsibility within the IQA process. This would, for example, be more clearly achieved by having one person responsible as head of the study field as discussed in section 1.1.

#### Strengths:

1. Close relationship between students and lecturers which take into account student suggestions in the process of the study course; open-minded lecturers;
2. Effective complaints and proposals system in place;
3. Well-functioning and active website of the college.
4. plans to develop the IQA process

#### Weaknesses:

1. Existing quality assurance procedures are not implemented consistently.
2. Improvement plans are measured by opportunity, inputs and availability rather than outcomes based, measurable objectives.
3. Results of feedback and evaluation from students and other stakeholders does not contribute to systematic demonstrable improvement.
4. Literature is outdated

### 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

Overall, there are various parts of quality system assurance which the College follows and implements but graduates are not seen to be involved in the quality assurance process conducting surveys, employer survey examples have been seen but none of the employers when asked mentioned it. There is no clear information on the regularity of the student surveys as indicated further in the analysis of the criteria.

- 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

The College has a written quality policy which is to be found here:

<https://www.rmkl.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Kvalitates-politika.pdf> however the policy is not established as the behaviour does not coincide with the written policy and is not consistently applied.

- 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

Development of study programmes and their internal approval according to the SAR p.35, is done in cooperation with the Study Program Council, approved by College Council, then submitted to the LU Study department for approval. In the final stage it is approved by the Senate of the University of Latvia. The mechanism of periodic review is not detecting out of date literature.

- 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

There are various internal and external enactments used for the purpose of evaluation of students results as mentioned within the SAR p. 26 and these are -

LU RFMC Regulation on the Study and Examination Procedures -Nolikums-par-studiju-un-parbaudijumu-kartibu.pdf (rmk1.lv)

LU RFMC Regulation on the Organization and Conduct of State Final Examinations in the First Level Professional Higher Education Programs - LATVIJAS REPUBLIKAS IZGLĪTĪBAS UN ZINĀTNES MINISTRIJA (rmk1.lv)

LU RFMC Procedure for the Development and Renewal of Study Courses - Nolikums-par-studiju-kursu-izstradi.pdf (rmk1.lv)  
and others.

- 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

There is a system in place which helps to ensure qualifications of the teaching staff. There has been developed "Staff Management Policy of LU Riga First Medical College" in 2020 which describes the principles and procedures of LU RFMC in staff selection, employment relations, provision of motivation system and staff development.

- 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

There are no examples of graduate surveys provided to the expert team. During expert visits, there was no common answer regarding the regularity of the student surveys which causes questions and in clarity. None of the employers stated that they fill such surveys. They indicated that they do complete evaluations but only those of students after their internship period.

- 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

Overall, the College is working on various crucial quality assessment tools and criteria that are

implemented within the processes of the College systems. An example of it is the Quality Manual which has been indicated already under the 1.1. Although, the quality assurance system is not fully fulfilled because of lack of surveys and questionnaires, lack of feedback towards the involved groups. Students have never heard feedback of the survey results they have filled.

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

#### **Analysis**

1.3.1. There is the system functioning in the College, which determines and redistributes the financial support required for the implementation of the field and the corresponding study programs (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.1.).

The analysis of funding and available resources of the study field is performed every year, and it includes the identification of current needs and planning of the long-term necessary investment. Every year the College Administration meets with the teaching staff and the heads of study programs to discuss the results achieved during the previous academic year and to review needs of specific programs of the study field for the next planning stage.

The system for determining the financial provision of the College, including the study field "Health Care", is incorporated in the set of internal regulatory enactments of the University of Latvia RFMC "Accounting Policy" (approved by the College Order No. 1.14/23 of 16/09/2019).

Using the obtained funds, the study field and the activities of the College are financed in accordance with the prepared action plan and the approved budget. The College Administration and the Accounting Department meticulously control the use of funds in accordance with the approved budget.

Expenses and resources to cover expenses are planned in accordance with regulatory enactments of the budget expense planning. The main items of expenses are the following: staff remuneration, premises, maintenance expenses and utilities, scholarship costs, material expenses of the study process, purchase of the new equipment, reconstruction and repairs of premises. Grant funded expenses and own revenues were made of remuneration (64.89%), mandatory state social insurance contributions (15.79%), costs of goods and services (12.33%), capital expenses (1.70%) and scholarships (5.29%) in 2020 (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.1., Table 7).

The revenues at the College include: a grant from the basic state budget, tuition fees, services of the student hall of residence, rent of non-residential premises, participation fees in continuing education seminars, courses, attracted European funds (ESF, ERDF, ERASMUS+, etc.), attracted financial resources of cooperation partners to support specific target programs.

The biggest part of the financial resources was made of the state budget grant and own revenue from paid services (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.1., Table 6). The financial indicators of the College indicate a stable financial development. The share of own revenues is about 13% of the budget.

State budget expenditure per student (number of the study places financed by the state budget 347) of the study field „Health Care“ in 2020 (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.1., Table 8) demonstrates the biggest part of the expenses was made of the salary per student per year (61.19%), compulsory employer's state social insurance contributions per student per year (14.74%) and the payment for services per student per year (15.32%). Material, energy resources, water and inventory expenses per student per year are taking 5.82% and acquisition of fixed assets per student per year are taking 2.94% of the expenses.

There is a system functioning in the College for determining the needs of resources (equipment, literature resources) for implementation of the study field. The directors of the study programs „Medicine“ (41721) with qualification of a physician's assistant and a midwife explained that in the beginning of every academic year the list of the needed resources is being prepared, and the prioritization is being performed in case of restricted funding.

The academic staff (study program „Medicine“ (41721) with a qualification of a physician's assistant) and the students (study program „Medicine“ (41721) with a qualification of a physician's assistant) on the meeting on 24.03 confirmed the sufficient support by the teaching/learning equipment during the pandemic times. It shows that there is a functioning system in the College, which determines and redistributes the financial support required for the implementation of the field and the corresponding study programs.

There is no separate funding in the College for the applied research, however, some teachers (24.03., meeting with the academic staff (study program „Medicine“ (41721) with a qualification of a physician's assistant) confirmed the College supports them in the process of scientific research competence development (organizes and pays for the courses). However it is not clear if this kind of support is effective. Some teachers are acquainted with the volume of the scientific production necessary to publish during a certain time period. There are no clear criteria for the overall quality assessment of the scientific research results achieved in the study field.

1.3.2. As it is stated in SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.2., the equipment and other material resources for the study field implementation have been purchased using state budget funds, STEM (The Action Program "Growth and Employment" of the Ministry of Education and Science under the specific support objective 8.1.4 "Improvement of the study environment of the first level professional higher education STEM, including medical and creative industries, study environment in colleges" implements the support for the development of the College infrastructure and modernization of equipment, facilitates the acquisition of equipment and facilities for implementation of the first level professional higher education study programs) and European Regional Development Funds as well as the College own financial resources (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.2.) The College provides teaching equipment corresponding to modern technologies.

The College building on 37 Tomsona street has 11 well-equipped lecture rooms, which can accommodate 40 to 160 students (depending on the size of the lecture room). The building of the student hall of residence on 39 Tomsona street has 5 well-equipped lecture rooms, each being able to accommodate up to 70 students. Lecture rooms have multimedia equipment, such as laptops, projectors for illustrating lecture materials, seminar content and demonstration of various presentations, video conferencing systems, portable interactive whiteboards for visualization of the lesson content. Computer equipment enables operative use of Internet resources and other information, including visual, and is a tool ensuring the application of the selected teaching method.

To facilitate the acquisition of specific course themes and to train future medical practitioners in specific specialties, the College has set up training classrooms that have been equipped with specialized equipment similar to the one used in real work environments. The general equipment in the classrooms performs the auxiliary functions in the learning environment, while the specialized equipment is intended for the development of professional skills of students. There is a total of 19 such training classrooms equipped with modern simulators, manipulation models, various mock-ups, mannequins and other technological equipment.

In recent years, the College has invested considerable resources into the provision of technical and material support for lectures and other types of classes. The most important works that have been carried out for improving the learning environment have been the following:

- Equipment and facility renewal and supplementation in the classrooms allocated to training of nurses, physician assistants, midwives and pharmacist assistants, including the acquisition of a pharmacy model for training pharmacist assistants, which was set up with the support of "BENU Aptieka Latvija", Ltd., and the establishment of the training environment for the development of medicine preparation skills;
- Purchase of 14 innovative interactive whiteboards (4 of them are mobile) and displays "Samsung 65' Led", which improve the quality of teaching and learning;
- Two video conferencing systems for providing online lectures and for ensuring the participation of the College staff in conferences and seminars.

In the first half of 2020, the last stage of the strategically important EU-funded STEM project "Modernization of STEM educational program infrastructure at LU Riga First Medical College" was completed, the outcome of which was the delivery of new modern equipment to STEM training rooms, which has become an integral part of student training. The STEM project resulted in the acquisition of the following equipment and the creation of training environment for specific medical purposes:

- a training EMS vehicle model similar to real EMS vehicles to enable students to acquire emergency medical algorithms and practical skills
- a training neonatal intensive care unit (10 steps)
- a computerized multifunctional birthing simulator mannequin
- a health care and palliative care unit
- two new training rooms equipped for conducting specific medical manipulations
- environment created for practicing health care and basic need satisfaction skills

The LU RFMC students and lecturers are provided with a well developed IT infrastructure (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.2., Table 11). In the study process computer equipment, multimedia equipment, projectors, interactive whiteboards, video conferencing systems, webcams, digital document cameras and wireless Internet are being used. Students and academic staff have access to computers, including free-access computers, and the Internet in a computer classroom, library, departments, seminar rooms, specific study rooms, student hall of residence, and free-access computers are available. Students and academic staff use licensed Microsoft software on a daily basis. In order to acquire the competences in information technologies essential for health care staff, the College has acquired the SmartMedical system. Multifunctional printing equipment is available in the College. Wireless Internet is available in the College and student hall of residence. The IT specialist, working on site of the College, provides the academic staff with necessary support for video recording, online lectures and lectures taking place in classrooms with complex multimedia equipment.

All LU RFMC study rooms are suitable for studies, and they fully comply with sanitary requirements and other current regulatory enactments on the quality of study rooms.

On the tour of the facilities the College demonstrated a wide variety of the equipment used for the achievement of the study results. During the meeting the students (03.24 study program „Medicine“ (41721), qualification of a physician's assistant) confirmed they are using different equipment, some of it, for example, emergency car, which is extremely appreciated as the unique, obtained only by Riga First Medical College. The teachers and the students confirmed nothing is missing in the provision of the resources for the study programs' implementation. Students were satisfied with the qualification and experience of the teachers, they confirmed the teachers are collaborative and wished to share their experience with them.

As it was mentioned in the previous paragraph 1.3.1 (Joint report), the directors of the study programs „Medicine“ (41721) with qualification of a physician's assistant and a midwife explained

that in the beginning of every academic year the list of the needed resources is being prepared, and the prioritization is being performed in case of restricted funding. It shows there is a unified system for the purchase of material and informative provision.

The Students (03.24, the meeting with the students of the study program Medicine (41721) with a qualification of a physician's assistant) provided some examples, how the teachers employed some specific study/communication during pandemic times method which was very useful during the lockdown period, it was recommended specifically by the students. The Students confirmed they can feel and notice the positive changes (improvements) in the study programs, which were made as the response to the students' feedback.

1.3.3. To improve and acquire the infrastructure resources, material and technical provision, methodological support of the study field, the College applies the regulations on preparing and conducting procurement at LU RFMC, which determine the procedure for the development, approval and updating of the procurement plan for the current calendar year, the activities of the Procurement Commission, procurement procedures, etc. (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.3.).

To purchase new resources, the College has developed an application procedure with the following justification steps which are listed in the SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.3.

Library resources and databases are available to students and meet the needs of the study field:

1. The open access subscription of the library is available to students and staff from 9 am to 6 pm from Monday to Friday and from 10 am to 1 pm on Saturdays.
2. The library users have access to 16 reading places and 6 workstations equipped with computers and the wireless Internet.
3. The library offers an open access subscription providing an opportunity to receive books for home use and to use the library book collection in the library (for the on-site use of books).
4. The LU RFMC library offers a wide range of printed and electronic information resources, individual consultations on printing matters, search for electronic and other information, electronic catalogs of LNL, RCL and foreign libraries, and search for specific thematic information.
5. The library provides books and other information resources for work at home. The reading room contains the latest study and scientific literature collection, periodicals and theses that students can read and that have been appropriately systematized since 2010.
6. In order to improve the library collection consistent with the needs of students, the data on the issued resources are being analyzed, the academic staff are involved in the acquisition of literature for the library collection, users are encouraged to fill in a recommendation questionnaire.
7. The informative provision collection of study programs has been gradually renewed and supplemented, specifically: all literature requests of the academic staff of study programs are fulfilled; the latest books published in Latvia in the fields of medicine, social sciences and humanities are regularly purchased; the library offers important literature in other fields of science, too (communication, political science, psychology, research methods, education, ethics, etc.).

Some of the teachers (meeting with the staff of the study program „Medicine“ (41721) with a qualification of a midwife) could not recommend the textbook (midwifery) in English, so no possibility to be up to date. The explanation was the teachers were not specialized in the area. The use of English literature resources might be limited by the lack of English language skills (of the academic staff). It was obvious, because only a few of the teachers during the meeting with the expert panel could communicate in English.

1.3.4. The implementation of information and communication technology solutions in the study

process proceeds in accordance with the 6-year development plan for the LU RFMC study field "Health Care" (see SAR, Part I, ANNEX 3) and the directions of the cross-curricular development plan, for example in relation to the program content improvement, study process improvement, including e-environment, ensuring stable and modern study material and technical provision.

The basic information and communication technology solutions at LU RFMC, which are used in the study process, encompass the E-learning environment (MOODLE), virtual cooperation platforms for students and the teaching staff (ZOOM, Google Workspace applications), the platform E-class for communication and learning process management (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.4.).

The College E-learning environment at <http://estudijas.rmk1.lv/login/index.php> provides students with access to information on study courses to be acquired (description of study courses), contact information of lecturers teaching such courses, study materials created or adapted by the teaching staff, tests, student surveys, and other materials, which are systematized in 5 blocks within the framework of each study course - lecture materials, practical class materials, additional study materials, independent work assignments and tests.

To support student and teaching staff activities in the E-learning environment at <http://estudijas.rmk1.lv/login/index.php>, on cooperation platforms (ZOOM, Google Workspace) and on the platform E-class, designed for communication and learning process management, the College employs 2 computer network administrators. Methodical activities are coordinated by the Study Department.

Moodle system and two others are used for remote learning, it was shortly demonstrated during the tour of the facilities at the College. The academic staff members (03.24, study program „Medicine“ (41721) with a qualification of a physician's assistant) said some of them use Moodle, but it is up to the teacher to use Moodle or not.

1.3.5. The personnel selection process focuses on the assessment of candidates' competences, professional skills and self-motivation. The College staff need to have good English language skills for transnational mobility. The increasing share of IT systems in various processes requires excellent digital skills and systematic thinking. Applicants for the academic positions have to meet high pedagogical qualification requirements and have excellent organizational and professional competences (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.5.).

The College employs academic staff for the study programs of the study field "Health Care" in accordance with the provisions of Part 1 of Section 55, Sections 101 and 39 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. The College employs highly qualified academic and pedagogical staff (with advanced qualifications), appropriate competences and good reputation to implement the study field and achieve the expected learning outcomes (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.5.).

Competitions for the academic and general staff positions and the positions of the Heads of Departments proceed in accordance with the LU RFMC regulations (approved by the University of Latvia Senate decision No.299 of 15/04/2019) and are announced openly on the College website and on the portal "Latvijas Vēstnesis" (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.5.).

When recruiting guest lecturers, their practical work experience and the relevance of that experience to study courses are considered a priority (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.5.).

As it is stated in SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.5, the selection and recruitment of academic staff, announcement of vacancies, competition rules, election procedures and their assessment are

regulated by the following LU RFMC internal regulatory enactments: "LU RFMC Personnel Management Policy" (available only in Latvian at: <https://www.rmkl.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/LUR1MK-Personala-vadibas-politika.pdf>), "LU RFMC Regulations of the Employment Procedure" (available only in Latvian at: <https://www.rmkl.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/LU-R1MK-Darba-kartibas-noteikumi.pdf>), "LU RFMC Regulations on Academic and Administrative Positions" (available only in Latvian at: <https://www.rmkl.lv/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/nolikums-par-koled%C5%BEas-akad%C4%93miskajiem-un-administrat%C4%ABvajiem-amatiem.pdf>).

Students were satisfied with the qualification and experience of the teachers, they confirmed the teachers are collaborative and wished to share their experience with the students (meeting with the students on 03.24, study program „Medicine“ (41721), qualification of a physician’s assistant). However there were some issues noticed that some study subjects in the study program „Medicine“ (41721) with qualification of a midwife were taught by obstetricians, not midwives.

Directors of the study programs (meetings with the directors of the study programs on 03.24 and 03.25) confirmed there is a possibility to invite highly competent teachers in case there is a need for it. However there might be an issue, because in the meeting with the academic staff of the study program “Midwifery” no teachers (midwives) participated.

1.3.6. Pedagogical competencies of academic staff comply with the criteria specified in regulatory documents and are regularly improved in compliance with the provisions of Clause 16 of the Cabinet of Ministers regulations of 11/09/2018 "Regulations on Education and Professional Qualifications of Academic Staff and Procedures for Improving Academic Staff Professional Competencies" (SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.7.).

As it is stated in SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.6., one of the key aspects of the development direction "Competent Academic Staff" of the LU RFMC Development Strategy for 2015 - 2020 was the development of the system of further professional development of academic staff, which is set to continue in the next period – from 2021 to 2027. In accordance with the College strategy, the College implements a consistent LU RFMC system of further professional development of academic staff, which offers further professional development opportunities to academic staff.

Professional development of the academic staff at the University of Latvia is organized in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia Regulation No.662 of 11/09/2018 "Regulations on the Education and Professional Qualifications of Academic Staff and the Procedure for Improving the Professional Competence of Academic Staff", and specifically, Paragraph 16, which stipulates that "university and college academic staff must acquire professional development programs on innovations in higher education in the amount of 160 academic hours (including at least 60 contact hours) by the end of their election term. Professional development may include international mobility corresponding to the purpose of professional development, participation in conferences and seminars, as evidenced by the submitted documents." (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.6.).

The LU RFMC Study Department and Administration Department provide informative, consultative and methodological support to the College academic staff on university didactics, organize guest lectures in pedagogy and methodology, offer the academic staff to acquire the professional development program "University Didactics: Modern Theories and Practice" (in cooperation with the LU Faculty of Education, Psychology and Arts), encourage the academic staff to enroll in other continuing education programs of LU and other education and medical science universities on issues



in education and medicine (in line with the study field "Health Care") (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.6.). As an example, in 2019, 38 members of the College academic staff completed the program "University Didactics: Modern Theories and Practice" as a result of organizational involvement of the Heads of Departments. As the majority of the academic staff participating in the implementation of the study field are practicing medical professionals in their specific field of health care (in 2020, 81% of the 21 elected academic staff worked in hospitals, pharmacies, health centers, EMS), the formal and informal professional development of these lecturers takes place several times a year and includes their participation in international professional development activities. In 2019-2021, many lecturers attended English language courses, including those organized by LU and LU RFMC. The LU RFMC Personnel Department provided the teaching staff of the study field "Health Care" with information on the most significant professional development events in 2013-2020. The Heads of Study Programs and the Heads of Departments organize observations of lecturers of the teaching staff, which is especially important for new lecturers. The enhancement of academic staff competences and their performance quality are assessed and motivated in accordance with the regulatory document "Regulations on Remuneration and Workload of RFMC Academic Staff" (approved by the LU RFMC Council Decision No.10 of 16/09/2020), which define the quality criteria for the award of bonuses and cash prizes to the College academic staff, such quality of pedagogical process, supervision of students' theses, methodological activities in the study program and study course, scientific research activities, international mobility, participation in projects, further development of competences, work experience at LU RFMC, boosting the prestige of the College, loyalty.

The wide range of the competence enhancement events (teaching staff attended many seminars and conferences abroad) were supported by the College in 2019-2020, the examples are given in SAR, Part I, ANNEX 55 „Enhancing the qualification of the College teaching staff. Examples (2019-2020).

The quality assurance system for professional activities of the academic staff is integrated into the quality policy guidelines and quality policy of the College (available at: LU RFMC Quality Manual - <https://www.rmkl.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/LU-R1MK-Kvalitates-rokasgramata-.pdf>).

Some teachers during the meetings confirmed they have a possibility to improve their professional and didactic competences as such need is determined. However there was no clear explanation given by the administration of the College and study programs directors about the measures used for the assessment of competence improvement effectiveness.

1.3.7. The academic, research and administrative (if applicable) workload of the teaching staff is balanced.

As it is stated in SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.7., the balance of the academic and research workload of the teaching staff is determined in Annex 1 "Workload Standards of the Academic Staff" of the College's internal regulation "Regulations on the Remuneration and Workload of the Academic Staff of LU RFMC", which defines the lecturers' classroom workload, consultations, scientific activities, methodological activities, internship supervision and other proportions of the workload.

The lecturers involved in the implementation of the study programs of the study field plan their pedagogical workload in accordance with the study program of each study semester in the academic year (SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.7.). Specific study courses and workload are reviewed in accordance with the need and provisions of regulatory enactments. The College promotes a balanced life style of workload and rest as well as a healthy lifestyle for lecturers to reduce and prevent the risk of

burnout of academic staff. In order to facilitate the acquisition of full-fledged knowledge and skills valued in the labor market, in addition to the permanent staff, the College recruits pedagogical staff on a contract basis for a definite term. Among these teaching staff, there are medical professionals and academic staff elected in other higher education institutions.

The proportion of the guest lecturers in the study field increased from 47.0% in 2013 to 75.3% in 2019 (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.7., Fig. 5. Elected academic staff of the study field "Health Care"). The percent of lecturers decreased from 45.8% in 2013 to 21.2% in 2019. The proportion of the assistant professors decreased from 7.2% in 2013 to 3.5% in 2019.

The teachers (meeting with an academic staff 03.24 study program „Medicine“ (41721) with a qualification of a physician's assistant and a midwife) confirmed the academic and research workload is balanced, however some of the teachers stated they are performing scientific work on their vacation time or the other time when they are having less lectures.

1.3.8. As it is stated in the SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.8, the first year students at the College at the beginning of each academic year, are introduced with the study premises, the content and form of the study process; they meet with academic and administrative staff. First-year students have the opportunity to receive support and answers to various questions about studies, activities of the College and other issues from their experienced colleagues – senior year students, participate in extracurricular activities (Students' Self-government events, vocal ensemble, sports classes, etc.).

The College Administration always engages in a dialogue with students, including individual consultations. In order to facilitate students' adaptation to the study environment and promote interest in the pursued profession, a Career Day - Introduction to Specialty/Meeting with a Star - is organized every year. During this event, students meet potential employers from Children's University Hospitals, Riga East Clinical University Hospital, P. Stradiņš Clinical University Hospital, EMS, Latvian Dental Association, Pharmacists' Society of Latvia, etc. (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.8).

The College purposefully involves support staff and structural units in work with students in order to timely identify possible communication barriers with the academic staff, personal psychological problems, etc. During the admission period, applicants are interviewed to determine their goals and motivation, thus, promptly reducing the risk of students' premature dropping out of the College.

The foreign students, having an Erasmus+ internship, are offered to use the College student accommodations, College canteen services, computer class and library; at the beginning of the internship, a coordinator from the Student Self-government is assigned to each foreign student, who helps them to adapt to the new environment, get to know the city and how to get to the internship place (clinic), etc. Some students with disabilities also study at the College, but in a form that allows them to acquire the medical profession without difficulty. If necessary, there is a mobile wheelchair lift available, which has been purchased by the College. All programs offered at the College are full-time and face-to-face. During the Covid-19 pandemic, students can use various learning materials in the e-environment, Moodle and databases recommended by the library in distance learning classes (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.3.8).

Every year students' well-being and available support is indicated in student surveys which are completed by students of all years, including the first year students (available at: <https://www.rmkl.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Nolikums-par-LU-R1MK-regularajam-aptaujam.pdf>) (the source in Latvian language).

Students on the meetings with the expert panel confirm they are aware of the support they can get

from the College and they get all the answers from the study director to all their questions. Students are getting feedback about their study progress from teachers, which are commenting on the assessments or exam results. The students confirm there is all information they need on the website of the College.

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

#### **Conclusions :**

The College has established a system for determining and redistributing the financial support required for the implementation of the study field and the corresponding study programmes. There is no separate funding in the College for the applied research. The College has developed a system and procedures for the improvement and purchase of methodological and informative provision. Library resources and databases are available to students, however the lack of the textbooks of Midwifery in the English language was observed. The information and communication technology solutions used to ensure the study process are appropriate and effective, however the use of Moodle system is not mandatory for the teachers. The College has defined, implemented and followed procedures to attract the qualified teaching staff, but the system is not effective enough, because some subjects of the study programme “Midwifery” are not taught by the midwives practitioners. The needs of professional and didactic development of the teaching staff are purposefully determined, however the measures for evaluating the results of the teachers’ competence development, are not implemented. The academic and research workload of the teaching staff is balanced. The College has identified the necessary support for students and the students confirmed the effectiveness of the support system established to meet their needs.

#### **Strengths:**

1. There is the effective system functioning in the College, which determines and redistributes the financial support required for the implementation of the field and the corresponding study programmes.
2. Students and teachers are satisfied about the availability of infrastructure resources and material and technical support necessary for the implementation of the study field.
3. Students are satisfied with the qualification of the teachers and collaborative approach towards the students.
4. Students confirm the effectiveness of the support system established to meet their needs.
5. Balance of the academic and research workload of the teaching staff is ensured by the internal regulations.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. There is no separate funding in the College for the applied research. Some teachers confirmed the College supports them in the process of scientific research competence development. However it is not clear if this kind of support is effective.
2. The lack of the textbooks of Midwifery in the English language was observed.
3. Use of Moodle system is not mandatory for the teachers. When it is left for a free choice, the College can not ensure the efficiency of the solutions and tools used in case the study programmes corresponding to the study field are implemented in the form of distance learning.
4. The system of attracting qualified teaching staff is not effective enough, because some subjects of the study programme “Midwifery” are not taught by the midwives practitioners.
5. The measures for evaluating the results of the teachers’ competence development, are not implemented.

## 1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

### Analysis

1.4.1. Priority research directions (prevention in all study programs) at the College are identified in accordance with topical issues in healthcare (Strategy of Riga First Medical College of the University of Latvia for 2015-2020). Some research directions, planned by the students and academic staff, such as prevention, reproductive health prevention and promotion, research in cooperation with SIA "Euroaptieka" on "Customer flow in pharmacy and efficiency of pharmacist assistant services as an indicator of pharmaceutical care quality", envisaging the continuation of the research project on the international scale with partners from Tallinn Health College and Kaunas College reflect the relevance of directions of the scientific research of the study field on Health Care study field and industry (health care system).

For more than 20 years, the College has been implementing the prevention direction at all levels of health care, which is special and unique for Riga Medical College in several aspects, one of them, as it is stated in the Strategy of Riga First Medical College of the University of Latvia for 2015-2020, it is a priority in research carried out by students and academic staff (the results are evident in annual international scientific conferences held at the College). Prevention direction is being implemented at the public education level – students participate in health promotion activities in Latvia, including the events at general education schools, pre-school institutions, etc.

The efficiency indicators of scientific research activities were established in Riga First Medical College Strategy 2015-2020, they covered the number of orders for applied research received from employers, the volume of research outcomes published in the College annual publications and the College website. By 2020 in accordance with the priority research direction "Prevention", overall students and academic staff had carried out at least 10 researches on the topic of prevention in the study programs "Physician Assistant", "Midwife", "Pharmacist Assistant", "Nursing" and "Dentistry" within the framework of each study program.

Relevance of the directions of scientific research and / or applied research of the study field on the study field and industry is proven by the cooperation with healthcare specialists while organizing research activities at the College.

As it is stated in the Strategy of Riga First Medical College of the University of Latvia for 2015-2020 (Approved by Riga First Medical College Board Meeting of 27 September 2016, Protocol No 5), one of the objectives of the College is "in accordance with the demand of the labor market, in cooperation with the University of Latvia and other higher education institutions, professional associations and societies to create new study programs and develop research activities". More rapid development of scientific research activities with the focus on practical usability is recognized as the opportunity for the College development.

"Research consistent with the current interests of the labour market" was one of the development directions in Riga First Medical College Strategy 2015-2020. Aims of action directions were development of research activities in cooperation with LU, LLU, RSU and other HEI, colleges in Latvia and abroad, employers and foreign partners. Involvement of employers in the choice of research direction of the College. Student research is the leading factor of the College's innovative activities and the most important development indicator. The College is striving to involve students in research activities, using the experience and capacities of the University of Latvia and other large HEI in pertinence to engagement in scientific projects, which fulfills the funding terms and conditions regarding the involvement of students in scientific research activities.

1.4.2. The connection between the scientific research and the study process is ensured by the several mechanisms (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.4.2., page 3): (1) improvement of the students' research competences by the practical course "Foundation of Research", which is integrated in the study field. The aim of the course is to develop the students' applied research skills, to teach them how to formulate research themes by working on the themes of their theses and to encourage

students to embark on theoretical and practical parts of their thesis research; (2) providing students with the opportunity to engage in research that is important and useful for a specified sector of healthcare; (3) providing students with the opportunity to engage in the interdisciplinary research by collaborating with academic staff of the College and presenting the results of the joint research work in the annually organized scientific conference. There were 25 abstracts presented by the College students and academic staff during the period of 2021-2018 at the Latvia University conference "Interdisciplinary Research at Medical Colleges". The abstract titles reflect the results of research, which was implemented in the certain areas of medicine, which are included in the study course content of the study programs at the College. For example, "Medication with increased toxicological risk in pharmaceutical care", "Midwifery support for parents in case of child perinatal mortality" and others (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.4.2., page 3).

Development plan of the Latvia University Riga First Medical College Study Direction "Health Care" for the period 2021-2027 (see SAR, Part I, ANNEX 3) justifies the connection of scientific research of the study field with the studies by establishing development directions "4. Current research consistent with labor market interests" the tasks 4.1. To lead and support the work of lecturers and lecturers' research groups and the development of scientific publications of the teaching staff such as paper collections, abstract collections of the conferences, internationally cited databases (Scopus, Web of Science, etc.); 4.2. To ensure the compliance of the formulation of students' theses with the approved research directions and recommendations of employers. The expected outcomes for these tasks are at least 2 publications for the elected academic staff in the period 2021-2027 and the relevance of the topics is assessed by the Scientific Council before the start of work on the thesis.

Development plan of the Latvia University Riga First Medical College Study Field "Health Care" for the period 2021-2027 (see SAR, Part I, ANNEX 3) includes the development direction "4. Current research consistent with labor market interests" the task 4.3. To ensure the specified number of student publications in Latvia University Riga First Medical College paper collections and collections of abstracts of Latvian and international conferences. The expected outcomes for this task is at least 80% of all publications are student papers or abstracts. It is expected to involve not less than 75% of the students and graduates participating in Latvia University First Medical College international conferences and Latvia University international scientific conference sections on "Interdisciplinary Research at Medical Colleges". The expected outcome for the task 4.8. To ensure the implementation of joint cooperation research / projects with foreign cooperation partners in each study program, at least one research has been implemented in each study program.

Scientific research performance and it's integration in the study process was mainly explained by the academic staff members by the supervising the bachelor papers of the students (03.24, the meeting with the academic staff of the study programme „Medicine“ (41721) with a qualification of a midwife) and participating in the annual scientific events at the College. There is no separate system for funding scientific research. The College uses some of its savings to allocate some resources (03.23, the meeting with the Administration representatives of the College).

Teachers representing separate study programmes could not provide any examples of performing other scientific activities, except supervising the bachelor papers of the students and participating in the annual scientific events at the College. No examples about the scientific research, implemented by the teachers according to their personal scientific interests, related with their teaching subjects, were not given.

1.4.3. The College has developed the plan for the strengthening the international cooperation in the field of scientific research within the study field and has established several tasks for it, such as 4.5. task in the Development plan of the Latvia University Riga First Medical College Study Field "Health Care" for the period 2021-2027 (see SAR, Part I, ANNEX 3, page 6) is to organize Latvia University Riga First Medical College international weeks and scientific conferences, ensuring the

representation of foreign universities during the period 2021-2027, with the expected outcomes to organize at least 3 conferences (one in 2 years). 4.8. task is to ensure the implementation of joint cooperation in research / projects with foreign cooperation partners in each study program, aiming to have at least one research to get implemented in each study program. 4.9. task is to promote the participation of partner universities in Latvia University Riga First Medical College international scientific conferences, aiming to involve at least three foreign partner universities in each scientific conference. The task 4.10. in the Development plan of the Latvia University Riga First Medical College Study Field "Health Care" for the period 2021-2027 (see SAR, Part I, ANNEX 3, page 6) is to ensure the participation of foreign university students in the Latvia University Riga First Medical College international scientific conference, aiming to represent the students from at least 3 foreign universities in each scientific conference. It demonstrates that international cooperation in the field of scientific research is developed purposefully, with clear understanding about the aims and expected outcomes.

The main international partners for cooperation in the field of scientific research within the study field are partner institutions from Denmark, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Estonia (made the presentations at the international conference organized by the College in 2015), Kaunas College (made relevant presentations at international conference, organized by the College at 2016). Some specific partnership was developed in particular study programs, for example,

Pharmacy lecturers from the Medical College of the University of Plovdiv delivered their research outcomes in the presentation "Good pharmacy practice – care for the community". There are good examples provided of international cooperation in the field of the joint research projects with foreign partners in the Baltic States. Midwifery study program and Health Care department representatives participated in the joint research project with Kaunas College in 2018-2019.

Social partners are also involved in the international cooperation in the field of scientific research, for example, in cooperation with Euroaptieka, Ltd., the College has launched a pharmacy research project "Customer flow in pharmacy and efficiency of pharmacist assistant services as an indicator of the pharmaceutical care quality", which is envisaged to transform into an area of international research collaboration implemented with partners from Tallinn Health College and Kaunas College.

Some teachers of the study programme "Pharmacy" in the meeting with the expert panel provided several examples about the international cooperation in the frame of inviting international partners to participate in the annual international conference organized by the College and sharing experience with international partners during Erasmus+ teachers' exchange visits. However the internalization strategy which defines the priority countries for international collaboration, is missing, it was concluded in the meetings with the teachers and directors of the study programmes.

1.4.4. It is the mandatory requirement for the teaching staff (stated in the job descriptions) of conducting the scientific research and participating in the conferences that are internal and external to the College (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.4.4. page 5). Another requirement is submission of a report on own methodological and research activities, publications or other scientific activities, including those that yield innovation, to the College Council at least every three years (job descriptions of the lecturer and assistant professor positions are available in the Personnel Department).

The mechanism of the teaching staff involvement in the scientific research is well functioning, it is justified by the summary of the quantitative data on the scientific/applied research activities carried out within the framework of the study field over the reporting period (see SAR, Part I, ANNEX 13). Number of the staff members participating in the conferences (including international conferences) was increasing from 15 (2013) to 56 (2016) and remaining stable 51-55 in the period from 2017 to 2019. Number of the publications of academic staff (including books of abstracts, cited publications, industry journals) increased from 16 in 2013 to 39 in 2018 and 38 in 2019. Number of the teaching staff members participating in the EU co-funded projects (research in the areas of the study

direction, attracting study resources, etc.) increased from 3 (2013) to 11 (2020).

The College organized 8 international scientific conferences for academic staff and students and organized the following sections of scientific conferences in the period of 2013-2021 (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.4.4. page 5). List of the publications, patents, work of artistic creation of the teaching staff for the reporting period (see SAR, Part I, ANNEX 14) reflects active participation of the staff members in publishing scientific articles, based on the clinical research in 2019-2020 (Research LZP FLPP No. Izp-2018/2-0266) and 2018-2019 (TEXT-TKR 64179375THR2001, BAYER AG: BAY 1213790 / 17664 (FOXTROT), ID No. VM 2017/20/ESF), international research in 2018-2020 (for example SELK - 00005, MAA868IANT-005), textbooks „Care for clients with functional disorders. Client safety and environment. Technical aids and their application in client care and improvement of the quality of life“ (2019-2020). Digital study resource for students, students of vocational education programs and medical practitioners)

Some teachers are acquainted with the volume of the scientific production necessary to the public during a certain time period. Some of the academic staff members (03.24 the meeting with an academic staff of study programme „Medicine“ (41721) with a qualification of a midwife) stated there is a requirement to publish at least 1 article in two years, it is necessary to become the lecturer (03.24 the meeting with an academic staff of study programme „Medicine“ (41721) with a qualification of a physician's assistant). Clear and detailed criteria for the assessment of the teachers' involvement in scientific research, were not listed by leaders of the College and study field.

1.4.5. The involvement of the students in research projects during the implementation of the study programmes is ensured by the requirement to produce course papers and a thesis. It is related with the learning outcomes of the study programs, including the students' ability to yield creative and research-based solutions. Students' research provides the ideas for the development of the study field and the content of the study program for the future (examples?).

Number of the students presenting their research at the international scientific conferences organized by the College (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.4.5., Table 12) varied from 3 (2015) to 13 (2016) during the period from 2013 to 2021. Students who gave the presentations at international conferences, represented the qualifications of the midwives, physician assistant's, nurses and pharmacist assistants.

In 2013-2021, the research carried out by the College academic staff and students was published in 7 publications of the College - Papers and Books of Abstracts (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.4.5. page 8). The number of students with published papers and abstracts varied from 4 (2015) to 10 (2018) during the period from 2014 to 2021 (see SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.4.5. page 8, Table 13). Students who published papers and abstracts, represented the qualifications of the midwives, physician assistants, nurses and pharmacist assistants.

The international cooperation experience of the College has also been used in students' research, for example, on papers, such as „Comparison of Antenatal and Postnatal Health Care in Finland and Latvia“ in 2017 (SAR Part I, paragraph 2.4.3.).

The College is also aiming to promote involvement of the foreign students in the scientific research. The task 4.10. in the Development plan of the Latvia University Riga First Medical College Study Direction "Health Care" for the period 2021-2027 (see SAR, Part I, ANNEX 3, page 6) is to ensure the participation of foreign university students in the Latvia University Riga First Medical College international scientific conference, aiming to represent the students from at least 3 foreign universities in each scientific conference.

1.4.6. The College conducts mapping of a new type of a study program within the process of the study program management and facilitates the possibility of implementing a student-centered

approach. (SAR, Part I, paragraph 2.4.6., page 10). The mapping of the study programs boosts resource sharing activities, facilitates the development of joint study programs and reduces duplication of the study program contents. The results of the study program mapping are the obtained maps and observations that are intended for the analysis and assessment of the quality of the study programmes and for the subsequent improvement of study programmes.

The College Development Strategy defines the concept of the College IT infrastructure.

However the need for improvement of the IT infrastructure is foreseen. In order to ensure the development of a student-friendly E-environment in the College and the provision of new e-services, the current E-environment needs to be enhanced by the acquiring internationally recognized solutions.

The application and development of the innovation processes has been significantly influenced and accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, the examination procedure was implemented in the online mode in 2020. It was confirmed by the teachers of the study programme "Pharmacy" in the meeting with the expert panel on 03.25.

The graduates were described by the social partners (03.24 meeting with the employers for all study programmes) as very initiative, interested in continuous education, well prepared, capable of working with innovations, demonstrating excellent digital skills, sometimes additional training with the newly purchased equipment are needed.

However, the some graduates (03.24 meeting with the graduates of the study programme Medicine (41721) with a qualification of a physician's assistant and a midwife) expressed the wish to participate in the feedback surveys and share their experience (from the career perspective) about the possible improvements in the study programmes.

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

### **Conclusions:**

The directions of scientific research of the study field correspond to the development goals of the College and are relevant for the study field and industry.

The connection of scientific research of the study field with the study process is logical and justified. Scientific research and the outcomes thereof are integrated in the study process in the study programmes. International cooperation in the field of scientific research within the study field and the relevant study programmes is ensured, however there is lack of evidence the international collaboration is purposefully developed. The College has developed mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research. Participation in the scientific research activities is based on the mandatory requirements in the job descriptions of the academic staff, no additional motivating mechanisms are employed. The criteria for the assessment of the teachers' involvement in scientific research are missing. Limited variety of the scientific activities performed by the academic staff of the study programmes and not sufficient application of scientific research results in the study programmes. The College has developed mechanisms to promote the involvement of the students in scientific research. They are well-functioning and efficient. Innovative solutions are applied in the study field, which have a significant positive impact on the study process.

### **Strengths:**

1. The main directions of scientific research of the study field are clear and remain stable for the last 20 years; they are reflected in the Strategy of LU RFMC and correspond with the topical issues in healthcare.
2. There are well functioning mechanisms ensuring the involvement of the students in the scientific research, based on the students' research competence development integrated in the learning



outcomes of the study programs.

3. Innovative solutions are applied in the study field, which have a significant positive impact on the study process, as well as for the successful professional career of the graduates. Employers are satisfied with the competence of the graduates, including their ability to work with innovations.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited variety of the scientific activities performed by the academic staff of the study programmes and not sufficient application of scientific research results in the study programmes.
2. There is lack of evidence that the international collaboration in applied research area is purposefully developed.
3. Participation in the scientific research activities is based on the mandatory requirements in the job descriptions of the academic staff, no additional motivating mechanisms are employed. The criteria for the assessment of the teachers' involvement in scientific research are missing.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

By 2020 in accordance with the priority research direction "Prevention", overall students and academic staff had carried out at least 10 researches on the topic of prevention in the study programs "Physician Assistant", "Midwife", "Pharmacist Assistant", "Nursing" and "Dentistry" within the framework of each study program (see the analysis results of the criteria 1.4.1. in the Joint Report, Assessment of the study field Health Care, section 1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation).

The analysis results of the criteria 1.4.4. (see the Joint Report, Assessment of the study field Health Care, section 1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation) confirmed the number of the staff members participating in the conferences (including international conferences) was increasing from 15 (2013) to 56 (2016) and remaining stable 51-55 in the period from 2017 to 2019. Number of the publications of academic staff (including books of abstracts, cited publications, industry journals) increased from 16 in 2013 to 39 in 2018 and 38 in 2019. Number of the teaching staff members participating in the EU co-funded projects (research in the areas of the study direction, attracting study resources, etc.) increased from 3 (2013) to 11 (2020). The above mentioned analysis results, as well as the Strengths identified by the expert panel and stated in Joint Report (Assessment of the Study Field Health Care, Section 1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation) are proving the compliance of the scientific research with the level of development of scientific research in the field of Health Care.

However, following the information mentioned by academic staff during the site visit and after the analysis of 1.4.1. – 1.4.6. in the Joint Report Part I some significant weaknesses of scientific research in the field of Health Care were identified by the experts, such as insufficient application of scientific research results in the study programmes (teachers representing separate study programmes could not provide any examples of performing other scientific activities, except supervising the bachelor papers of the students and participating in the annual scientific events at the College. No examples about the scientific research, implemented by the teachers according to their personal scientific interests, related with their teaching subjects, were given), lack of evidence of the purposeful international collaboration (some teachers of the study programme "Pharmacy" in the meeting with the expert panel provided several examples about the international cooperation in the frame of inviting international partners to participate in the annual international conference organized by the College and sharing experience with

international partners during Erasmus+ teachers' exchange visits, however the internalization strategy which defines the priority countries for international collaboration, was missing, it was concluded in the meetings with the teachers and directors of the study programmes), lack of additional motivating mechanisms for the teachers get involved in the scientific research (there is no separate system for funding scientific research, the College uses some of its savings to allocate some resources, it was stated on 03.23 during the meeting with the Administration representatives of the College). The above mentioned weaknesses reflected the lack of the system for scientific research integration to the studies, insufficient teacher's motivation for the scientific research and absence of internationalisation strategy. The deficiencies could impose a significant risk for the future period in the field of the compliance of the scientific research with the level of development of scientific research in the Health Care study field.

Taking into account that the requirement must assess whether scientific research comply with the level of development of scientific research and the status of the college, the implemented first level professional higher education study programmes and achieved results, all together experts assessed this requirement as fully compliant

Yet, the College must find solutions to the shortcomings identified so as not to jeopardize the research results achieved and their future development.

## **1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

### **Analysis**

1.5.1 Assessment of documentation provided by college as well as the information obtained during the on-site visit to the college results in analysis and further conclusions. There is effective existing cooperation between college and University of Latvia, both in intellectual property, workforce academic staff and library resources (databases etc.). Cooperation organized with other colleagues on organizing scientific research conference annually (annual LU scientific conferences "Interdisciplinary Research at Medical Colleges") and joint working groups on the development of new professional standards (together with the RSU Red Cross Medical College and Pharmacists' Society of Latvia on the standards for pharmacist assistants) and by participating in international student competitions (See SAR, 2.5.1). Students and graduates were satisfied with a possibility to participate in a scientific research conference, they see it as valuable experience.

Cooperation with all Latvian colleges takes place within the framework of actions of the Association of Latvian Colleges when discussing and deciding on issues important for the development of college education. LU RFMC is planning to continue close cooperation with the University of Latvia in the areas of sharing of material and library resources and in consolidation of intellectual resources in the next medium-term plan. In cooperation with the University of Latvia, the College has already improved the management structure of the College and study process, and used the LU professional development opportunities for enhancing competencies of its academic staff. Another important factor is the opportunity offered to College graduates by the University of Latvia to pursue their education further in the second level professional higher education programs at the University of Latvia, which ensures the continuity of education.

Cooperation with professional associations is active and well- functioning in each study programme. Professional associations have a strong role in study content evaluation and quality assurance in final examinations (Latvian cooperation partners are listed in Annex 15). LU RFMC actively cooperates with employer professional associations, such as Latvian Nurses Association, Emergency Medicine Association of the Republic of Latvia, Latvian Society of Outpatient Physician Assistants, Latvian Association of Rural Family Doctors, Latvian Midwives Association, Pharmacists' Society of Latvia, etc. (see annex 15). In order to provide students with internships in the first level professional higher education programs "Medicine", "Nursing" and "Pharmacy", in the professional education program "Dentistry", cooperation has been established with more than 200 student

internship providers, and cooperation agreements have been concluded. Both graduates and employers were satisfied with a quality and quantity of practical training and its duration. According to employers provided information level of knowledge of students while starting practical training is good. Also students themselves were satisfied with a wide choice of practical training places. The cooperation partners are selected in view of the specific features of the study field and the relevant study programmes. During the visit expert group did not find any gaps between the strategic development aims and actual cooperation done nationally and internationally.

1.5.2. . Internationalization and cooperation internationally is one of the defined aims of college. LU RFMC successfully implements cooperation with foreign universities within the framework of both the Erasmus+ and Nordplus programs. Also there is a future plan for developing existing cooperation, for example graduates can continue studies in University of Latvia (2nd level professional education programmes). (See Annex 8). The existing cooperation and internationalization policy is in line with the aims of the study direction and the development plan and can be assessed as good in general (see SAR 2.5.2) (see Annex 3, page 4). According to information received on meeting with the management team of college, current volume of Nordplus and Erasmus+ is relatively small due to covid, but there is an optimistic future cooperation plan. During the reporting period, there was cooperation and communication on various issues and directions binding on the College with a total of 50 international institutions. Negotiations with several partners still continue on possible cooperation in the next planning period from 2021 to 2027. Some new cooperation agreements have been concluded with Brno University of Veterinary and Pharmaceutical Sciences in the Czech Republic and B Braun Melsungen Training Center in Germany with which the College is planning to expand cooperation to include training of academic staff and students. (See SAR 2.5.2, Section 2.4.3 and in Annex 14). According to information received during on-site visit, internationalization partners currently mostly are from Baltic and Nordic region, and closest neighbor countries, it would be advised to develop a strategic long- term plan for internationalization and exchange both for students and teaching staff.

1.5.3. The College states that it has a good previous experience in attracting foreign students and guest lecturers, however, there are still untapped opportunities to be used for expanding and developing this process further in all study programs. Such actions are included in the LU RFMC Strategy for 2021-2027. Since 2020, difficulties in implementation of academic staff mobility have been caused by Covid-19 restrictions. College has reported criteria for the selection of foreign cooperation partners and the aims of such cooperation are provided in Section 2.5.2. In the reporting period 2013-2020, the largest number of guest lecturers who had delivered theoretical lectures and practical classes within the Erasmus+ mobility program was from Kaunas College, Klaipeda College, Utena College, Aarhus University, etc. (See Annex 17 and annex 18). During the on-site visit academic staff members demonstrated insufficient English language proficiency which might result in the obstacles in reading and understanding scientific literature and other library resources. Also this can be a barrier for communication, learning, or teaching abroad. Riga First Medical College of the University of Latvia does not implement a full-time study program in a foreign language, which is why full-time foreign students and lecturers are not attracted. (see Annex 16). There is no data on the amount of mobility programmes for practical training abroad. It would be needed to develop a strategic short and long-term plan for development of international cooperation and define needs in its assessment. This would be beneficial for ingoing and outgoing international mobility programs.

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

The existing cooperation and internationalization policy is in line with the aims of the study direction and the development plan and can be assessed as good in both cooperation and internationalization (internally and abroad). The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field. The experts group is

aware of the challenges in finding suitable mobility experiences and welcomes the expressed intent to seek cooperation partners that may provide internships abroad or seminars, and youth exchanges that are no longer than 2 weeks.

Strengths:

1. Internationalization and cooperation internationally is one of the defined aims of college.
2. College cooperation with different institutions from Latvia (higher education institutions/ colleges, employers, employers' organizations, municipalities, non-governmental organizations, scientific institutes, etc.) within the study field contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field. (See Annex 15)
3. The college has shown and explained to experts during the on-site visit how the college has developed a system and procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad within the study field. The system is effective, the number of outgoing mobilities is growing from year to year. Current number of exchange visits is limited due to Covid restrictions, but there is a positive future dynamics.

Weakness: None.

### **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

All requirements are fulfilled. Cooperation with all Latvian colleges takes place within the framework of actions of the Association of Latvian Colleges when discussing and deciding on issues important for the development of college education. LU RFMC actively cooperates with employer professional associations, such as Latvian Nurses Association, Emergency Medicine Association of the Republic of Latvia, Latvian Society of Outpatient Physician Assistants, Latvian Association of Rural Family Doctors, Latvian Midwives Association, Pharmacists' Society of Latvia, etc. (see annex 15).

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

### **Analysis**

Regarding the recommendations that were made at the previous assessment procedure, these are considered individually.

a). It was recommended that LU RFMC publications in the collections of college proceedings must be formatted in accordance with the standards of scientific literature. Research results should be formatted consistent with academic standards (in all study programs).

The College advised that the recommendation has been complied with and has been implemented. The College cited as evidence that collections of the College's papers and books of abstracts have been published and formatted in accordance with the standards of scientific literature. The College

asserted that research results are formatted consistent with academic standards. Teaching staff enhance their competences in scientific and publishing skills in cooperation with the University of Latvia. Furthermore, the expert panel were told that every year the skills of scientific activities of LU RFMC staff have been enhanced. The quality of the academic language, formatting and referencing of papers and abstracts has significantly increased after the College joined the University of Latvia. Since 2019, the academic staff have been attending specialized courses "Scientific Activities and Publishing Skills" organized by the University of Latvia. In 2020, students and lecturers attended the course "Fundamentals of Research Methodology" (led by Ruta Muceniece, Dr.habil.biol., lecturer, professor of the University of Latvia). Proper skills of the College's lecturers and students are evident in the outcomes of research activities, for example, in the LU RFMC publications of 2018 "Wellness of Patients and Medical Staff" and in the books of abstracts "Interdisciplinary Research at Medical Colleges", published in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. In 2022, the College is planning to publish the book of abstracts "Theory and Practice in Healthcare".

The expert panel commends the College on the publication of the book of abstracts entitled "Theory and Practice in Healthcare. This reflects some progress in this area, however the College has provided only vague evidence to demonstrate this. On-site inspection of documents and student work revealed continuing deficiencies in referencing and formatting.. It is noted that the referencing technique within the SAR does not follow a consistent recognized academic format. The commentary on the implementation of recommendations provided no outcomes based measures of achievement. The expert group (2012) requested Numbers of staff who have attended programmes intended to enhance academic language, formatting and referencing. This was provided in Latvian language.

b). A second recommendation is that the Committee recommends to establish closer links between the College research and the industry (in all study programs). The College considered that this recommendation has been fully implemented. Research directions and themes are coordinated with employers and industry experts. During the reporting period, the research activities of students and academic staff proceeded in close connection with employers, industry experts, following their recommendations in the selection of research themes. See the themes of students' theses:

- themes of theses in the study program "Medicine" with the qualification of the physician assistant:  
[https://www.rmkl.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Kvalifikacijas-darbu-temati\\_AP.pdf](https://www.rmkl.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Kvalifikacijas-darbu-temati_AP.pdf);

The expert panel reviewed research themes of student research activity and interviewed teachers, students and industry experts and concluded that this recommendation had been met.

c). Third recommendation is that the library is good, but should be supplemented with books in English (all study programs).Every year the collection of the LU RFMC library is supplemented with study literature in English and references to literature sources available in the e-environment in English for all study programs of the study field.

The College advised that recommendation has been complied with and has been implemented. It cited evidence that the amount of study literature and other sources available in the English language at LU RFMC library increases every year.

For comparison:

- In 2014, there were 78 books in English;
- In 2021, there were 199 textbooks in English for all study programs of the study field "Health Care", and 154 other literature resources in English, incl. encyclopedias, dictionaries.

A number of examples are provided.

The expert panel concluded that the provision of English language books had improved but could be further improved (Section 1.2.2 and 1.3.3).

d). A fourth recommendation is that academic staff must improve their English language skills (in all study programs). The College considered that this recommendation has been complied with and has been implemented. It reported that the English language skills of the teaching staff are improved in

foreign language classes organized by the College, in courses offered by the University of Latvia, etc. Since 2012, the English language skills of the College's academic staff have significantly improved. In the academic staff elections organized by the College in 2013 and 2019, the knowledge of foreign languages was set as an important criterion for each candidate. Every year lecturers have the opportunity to apply for English language courses organized by the College and the English language training offered by the University of Latvia. The College's academic staff and students regularly enhance their knowledge of English by participating in international conferences and Erasmus+ and Nordplus mobility programs.

The expert panel sought clarification of the evidence provided as it was too vague. It requested a list of lecturers who have attended English language courses organised by either the University or College in the last five years (year by year and course by course breakdown), details of how proficiency in English tested/assessed by the college? Evidence of a formal procedure, policy or college standard regarding teachers proficiency in English. Additionally information on how the college evaluates that teachers' knowledge of English is improved by participating in international conferences and Erasmus+ and Nordplus mobility programmes was requested and provided in Latvian language. Ongoing concern regarding English language proficiency was identified by the expert panel and is noted in sections 1.3.3 and 1.5.

e). It was previously identified that there were "Insufficient international cooperation. Few students to participate in international activities (programs, projects). Insufficient involvement of foreign guest lecturers " The panel noted that this recommendation is framed in a vague way, however increasing international co-operation and involving guest lecturers are both included in the development plan for the college which is discussed in section 1.5 of this report. The panel note that the university is monitoring progress in these areas and provide statistics which demonstrate a favourable upward trend which provides assurance that this recommendation is addressed.

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

For each of the previous recommendations, the College has identified some actions designed to address the issue and the expert panel view these efforts as a strength. However, the expert panel considered that limitations remained in some of the areas for which recommendations were made (Academic writing, English language, library provision). These are subject to recommendations made in the current review and further information is provided in the relevant sections. The expert panel were concerned that these recommendations had not been addressed more thoroughly. The expert panel concluded that each of the recommendations could be addressed in a more systematic way by setting measurable, outcomes-based targets that focus on quality improvement. In this way the College may more readily monitor improvement towards its goals.

It is recommended that all recommendations arising from assessment processes are addressed systematically, within an internal quality assurance framework and that for each, the College determines measurable, outcomes-based targets that focus on quality improvement. In this way the College may more readily monitor improvement towards its goals.

#### **Strength**

1.The College has identified a number of actions to address previous shortcomings

#### **Weakness**

2.The College is not identifying measurable goals to address shortcomings and monitor progress

### **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:** Partially compliant

HEI has partially fulfilled some recommendation of Experts provided in previous accreditation of the study field “Health Care” and this is indicated in the SAR . As mentioned above, the responses indicated possibilities for improvement but did not evidence actual improvement. Although the responses are welcomed, it is possible to frame them in a way by which progress can be measured

## 1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

1. The criteria for funding of scientific research must be developed.
2. Provide students and teaching staff with effective anti-plagiarism tools and establish effective procedures for academic integrity.
3. Establish a position of the head of the study field (one responsible person).
4.The library sources should be renewed, mainly focusing on the newest textbooks of Midwifery in English language
5. Use of Moodle system must be mandatory for all teachers in all study programmes.
6. The measures for evaluating the results of the teachers’ competence development, must be implemented.
7. Additional motivating mechanisms encouraging teachers to get involved in scientific research activity, must be implemented. The criteria for the assessment of the teachers’ involvement in scientific research, must be developed.
8. Create a plan with measurable objectives to raise the English language proficiency level of the academic staff.
9. A review of literature recommended for each programme should be conducted to ensure that sources are relevant and contemporary
10. Plans to develop the internal quality assurance system are welcomed and an implementation plan should be produced which demonstrates a systematic approach
11. The College must overview its management structure of the study field and positions that are given to people. The positions that are provided in the scheme in SAR p.21, are not in compliance with the information provided in the visit.
12. The College must clearly define how the study programmes are oriented towards the development of the study field in a structured and understandable way as well as how decision – making processes are governed and structured within the College.
13. The College must implement effective anti-plagiarism tools as Turnitin, for example.
14. The College must update guidelines regarding references with specific guidelines referencing articles, journals, books and scientific papers. It is not sufficient to provide one example and apply it to every source that is used.

## Long-term recommendations

1. It would benefit the student experience and career opportunities if part of the programme would be delivered in English. Proficiency levels of academic staff should be at a level whereby this can be achieved
2. The system to attract highly qualified teachers should be further improved, especially in the study programme "Midwifery". The proper teaching staff should be reconsidered for the certain study subjects (the subjects in the study programme Midwifery should be taught by midwives, not obstetricians)
3. The volume and scopes of the applied research in the field should be defined. Teachers, as well as the students should be involved in other scientific activities than bachelor papers preparation. Applied research could be focused on the study subjects or systematic literature analysis
4. It is recommended to review LU RFMC Internationalization Policy 2021-2027, assuring that strategy also defines the priority international partners and the partnership areas for the applied research field.
5. Students and other stakeholders should be informed how their feedback contributes to quality improvement.
6. Quality improvement plans must be developed within a regular cycle, that includes feedback from stakeholders and produces outcome based, measurable goals.
7. The College must involve foreign guest lecturers in the study process. .
8. The Academic staff must improve their English language skills. The College must provide English language training to their academic staff in order to maintain and improve their skills and reach at least B2 level.
9. The College must ensure courses that are taught in English and in that way ensuring attraction of foreign students.

## II - "Medicine" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Medicine" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

2.1.1. The study program "Medicine" with the qualification "physician assistant" complies with the study field of "Healthcare" indicators, conditions and criteria. The length of the implementation of the study program, which is 3 years, is evaluated as sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and practical experience to enter the labor market.

2.1.2. The title of the study program is "Medicine" in the study field "Healthcare" with education classification code 41721. The professional qualification given after finishing the studies at the college of the first level professional higher education study program is the "physician assistant". The aims of the program are to prepare highly professional and knowledgeable professionals with all the necessary skills for the labor market. As indicated by the college physician assistants are in demand in the labor market as well as have a solid foundation for lifelong learning in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, standard of the physician assistant profession and European Union directives according to SAR p. 130. It can be stated that all of the indicators are interrelated and effective. As indicated in 2.1.1, the study duration is 3 years and studies are



implemented full-time and only in Latvian language. The admission requirements of the study program is the secondary education or secondary vocational education. At the end of the studies students must acquire 120 credit points.

As the professionals are specifically meant to be prepared only for Latvian labor market and for the purpose to prepare specialists who are already graduates with substantial working experience and practical skills, the parameters set are seen as justifiable and reasonable.

2.1.3. As it is indicated within the SAR p. 133, no corrections have been made within the study program's parameters since the last accreditation process. In this case, there are no corrections that have to be analyzed, justified or supported from the experts' side of this accreditation procedure.

2.1.4. Graduates' employment and overall demand for physician assistants is very high in Latvian labor market due to the lack of specialists. Even though there is a significant increase of physician assistants during recent years, it is not seen as sufficient to satisfy the needs and demands of the labor market. Since the year of 2007, there has been an increase of physician assistants over 47% according to SAR p. 134. The specificity of this study program and overall profession of physician assistant is in Latvia, in addition to the nursing profession, there is also a profession of the physician assistant, which in certain cases can replace both a nurse (for example, in family doctor's practice, inpatient department) and a physician (for example, in emergency medical care, henceforth - EMC) which makes this program very useful and provide various position and work opportunities according to p. 134 of SAR. Currently, the data shows that physician assistants are mainly employed in the EMS service, inpatient wards and primary health care.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

Most of the indicators of the study program are in compliance with the existing preconditions of the implementation of the study program. There are no specific shortcomings indicated. Everything except the title for qualification is in compliance with the criteria.

Strengths:

1. High demand for physician assistants in the labor market;
2. Ability for graduates to find workplace easily and work as both - nurse and physician.

Weaknesses:

1. Title for qualification is not the same as title for relevant professional standard.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The study programme "Medicine" (41721) with qualification of a physician's assistant, is ensured to be topical through involvement of employers so that the demands of the labor market and the newest trends, skills needed are taught to the College students. For example, in the last 7 years, various study courses of this study programme have been improved according to recommendations and consultations that have happened before. An example that can be mentioned and are also included within the SAR p. 137, are the merge of "Psychology" and "Communication" courses which is now a one combined course called "Communication Psychology". A few new study courses have been introduced as "E-health", "Patient Safety" and "Introduction to Specialty".

It can be stated that the content of study courses is developed considering the aim of a specific study course, learning outcomes and the profession standard. This programme is in compliance with with national regulations - state education standard (Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No.141 of March 20, 2001 "Regulations regarding the State Standard for the First Level Professional Higher

Education”) which are accessible in the Annex 43, professional (occupational) standard or professional qualification requirements in the Annex 44.

The largest difficulty the College faces is regarding scientific research. Although, the College tries to participate in some ways in these scientific processes. According to SAR p. 138, the College manages to take part in research activities related to developments in the health care sciences, focuses on the enhancement of patient care and health maintenance, and effectively contributes to the development and enhancement of the study program and study courses. Academic staff mentioned during onsite visits that they try to participate in scientific conferences and seminars locally and abroad and transfer the gained knowledge within their study courses and advance their study materials.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. As mentioned within the study field analysis under management of the study field section, teaching staff tries to apply various forms of teaching methods within the study process. To mention a few, the SAR p.139 states that there are interactive lectures, practical interactive classes, seminars, independent work implemented to broaden the skills of the students in various ways. In such a way students develop their problem - solving skills, interaction skills, presentation skills and analytical skills. For the purpose of practical skill gaining the training rooms are used and very advanced to simulate real situations as an emergency car with all the necessary equipment. Of course, the College admitted that the Covid situation radically influenced how to provide practical skills towards students as the majority of lectures took place remotely through ZOOM, Google Meet or Whatsapp. During onsite visit, teaching staff and students confirmed that the lectures are of various differences and provided in an interactive way. From those meetings also became clear that currently Moodle platform is not very actively used for various purposes and its full capacity. There is some information provided there and tools of studies but other platforms are a substantial part of the study process as well.

It has to be noted that in some study course descriptions mandatory information sources are only in Latvian and some of them outdated. As for example, in Annex 48, p.67, there is a book which has been published in 1985 for the study course of Intensive Therapy and Toxicology. As the trends and techniques in healthcare are developing rapidly, information resources which are more than 30 years old seem to be outdated and the mandatory sources have to be reviewed.

2.2.4. As internship is a mandatory and crucial part of the study programme it is of high importance that opportunities and provision of internship is offered and the organization procedure of it is effective for all of the students. LU RFMC actively participates in internship provision for its students. The College has established a system for internship provision. According to SAR p.140, after the completion of the first year, students of the physician assistant specialty work in hospitals with different care departments. In their second year, students work at the Emergency Medical Service, in the third year - at the Emergency Medical Service and in GP practices. The College takes part in coordinating and approving experienced internship supervisors on internship sites and internship methodological supervisors representing the College. Students' internship tasks correspond to the practical skills required by the profession standard of the physician assistant. During an onsite visit meeting the students, they clarified that they have never had any problems regarding internships that are offered to them after every study year. Overall, the tasks of the internship are related to the learning outcomes achievable as well as complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments that are outlined within the Annex 49 - Regulations of the first level professional higher education internships of Riga First Medical College of the University of Latvia.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. In general, the final paper thesis is a very important component of the study programme. The topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme and are updated every year according to the trends in the field. As it is described in the SAR pp. 141-143, for example, the College cooperates with the potential employers and discusses the

topicality and trends of specific themes in the Emergency Medical Services, GP practices and outpatient services. In the last 7 years, 241 thesis were defended within this programme.

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

The content of the first level higher education programme "Medicine" (41721) with qualification of a physician's assistant, is relevant and contemporary, although a more critical approach to revision of the mandatory resources included in separate study courses is highly advised. The study programme content meets the needs of the industry and demands for the preparation of the specialists who can work after graduation as highly skilled professionals. One of the largest difficulties of the College is the scientific research, although the academic staff tries to participate in various seminars and conferences to improve their skills and knowledge. As the College is in a transition period and the complete implementation of the Moodle environment, it is expected that in the future it has fully transitioned itself to Moodle. The College is actively involved in providing internships to students after every study year. For this programme there are some outdated sources that have to be worked on.

Strengths:

1. Students' satisfaction with the content of the program and provision of internships;
2. The content of the study programme meets the industry needs and demands;

Weaknesses:

1. In some study course descriptions mandatory information sources are only in Latvian and some of them outdated;
2. Lack of scientific research involvement.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not relevant

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

#### **Analysis**

2.3.1. The study base of the LU RFMC program "Medicine" with the professional qualification of a physician assistant, which includes relevant structural units (departments, groups of lecturers, etc.) and the necessary support staff, complies with the conditions for the implementation of the study program. The information and methodological base, databases and literature available in the library also comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study program. The material and technical base and its availability to students and teaching staff ensure the implementation of the study program consistent with its specifications (SAR, Part II, paragraph 3.3.1.).

Studies are provided with a methodological base corresponding to the professional aims of the study program, its content and expected learning outcomes and study materials, which are regularly updated and supplemented. Students enjoy the opportunity to use study resources created by their

instructors in the e-environment. Computers and multimedia resources, the wireless Internet, computer classroom, library and reading room, study and methodological materials (hard covers and electronic format; CDs, DVDs) are used in the study process. The resources published in the e-environment, on the one hand, and the use of information and communication technologies for consultations, on the other hand, facilitate the acquisition of specific study topics outside the College context (SAR, Part II, paragraph 3.3.1.).

The College library offers students of the physician assistant program books on emergency medical aid, rehabilitation, surgery, disaster medicine, etc., theses, scientific research and methodological materials as well as medical periodicals. Students have access to systematized electronic open-access resources (e-books, e-journals, databases in disaster medicine, first aid, emergency medical aid, rehabilitation, physical therapy, resources in evidence-based medicine, health care, medical statistics, and digital resources of LNL) (SAR, Part II, paragraph 3.3.1.).

To attain the aims of the study program “Medicine” and to enable the usage of the selected teaching methods, the College has equipped lecture rooms and training rooms with necessary equipment and other material resources most of which were purchased on STEM, ERDF and College own funds. When implementing the STEM project, in 2019, the College was the first education institution in Latvia to have an EMS vehicle model installed, which since then has been used to develop students’ skills of emergency medical aid algorithms and other practical skills (SAR, Part II, paragraph 3.3.1.).

The initial stage of the study program is marked by general education courses, which take place in specially equipped lecture rooms and training rooms. These rooms are equipped with multimedia equipment (laptops, interactive whiteboards, projectors for displaying lecture and seminar materials and showing demonstrations, video conferencing systems for participation in conferences, seminars, training sessions). Computer equipment makes it possible to quickly obtain information from the Internet sources and visualize study materials and consequently encourage proper actions, thus, ensuring the implementation of the selected teaching method. The provision of IT infrastructure at LU RFMC is described in more detail in criterion 2.3.2 in Section 3 of Chapter II. Training rooms contain various material resources for training. Various situational tasks are completed in such training rooms. Library resources are described in criterion 2.3.3 in Section 3 of Chapter II.

Material and technical provision for the study program “Medicine” with the qualification of a physician assistant is available in Annex 50 (SAR, Part II, paragraph 3.3.1.).

Moodle system and two others are used for remote learning, it was shortly demonstrated during the tour of the facilities at the College. The academic staff members (03.24, study program „Medicine” (41721) with a qualification of a physician’s assistant) said some of them use Moodle, but it is up to the teacher to use Moodle or not.

### 2.3.2. Not applicable

2.3.3. The financial base and the costs of the study program correspond to the needs of the study program and the conditions of study program implementation. The financial resources of the study direction encompass the state budget funds and own revenues. The available financial resources ensure the implementation of the study program and the attainment of learning outcomes.

Number of the study places financed by the state budget in the study program (SAR, Part II, paragraph 3.3.3., Table 23 „State budget expenditure per student of the study program “Medicine” (physician assistant) in 2020”) was 104. Total study expenses per student per year consisting of: salary per 1 student per year (61.19%), compulsory employer’s state social insurance contributions (14.74%), payment for services – management of the building, infrastructure development (15.32%), modernization of teaching equipment, purchase of teaching materials and equipment (5.82%), acquisition of fixed assets (2.93%) are provided in SAR, Part II, paragraph 3.3.3., Table 23.

The interconnection of the study programs included in the study field ensures that a substantial portion of the material and technical provision purchased at the College (teaching equipment,

practical manipulation rooms, mock-ups, simulation mannequins, whiteboards, etc.) is successfully used not only in one but in several study programs.

Minimum number of students in the study program to ensure the profitability of the study program (SAR, Part II, paragraph 3.3.3., Table 23.1.) is 99 in the study program „Medicine“ (physician assistant), 64 in the study program „Medicine“ (midwife) and 93 in the study program „Pharmacy“ (pharmacy assistant).

There is no separate funding in the College for the applied research. Some teachers confirmed the College supports them in the process of scientific research competence development. However it is not clear if this kind of support is effective (see the Paragraph 1.3.1. in the Joint Report). Lack of the separate funding for the applied research and systematic teachers' support for applied research competence development might lead to the decreased teachers' motivation to perform applied research and integrate it's results to the study process.

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

The study provision, informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study program „Medicine with Qualification – Physician Assistant“, create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process.

However there is no separate funding in the College for the applied research. Some teachers confirmed the College supports them in the process of scientific research competence development. It is not clear whether the system for funding scientific research is effective.

Lack of the separate funding for the applied research and systematic teachers' support for applied research competence development might lead to the decreased teachers' motivation to perform applied research and integrate it's results to the study process.

The funding available to the study program, funding sources and the use of funding ensures full implementation of the study process, the study program has the minimum number of students to ensure the profitability of the study program and facilitates the development of the study program.

#### **Strengths:**

1. The study programme is fully equipped with the material, informative, technical resources, they are accessible and fully complying with the learning outcomes.
2. The funding to the study programme for the provision by material, informative, technical resources, is sufficient. The study programme is being implemented in the profitable way.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. Lack of the separate funding for the applied research and systematic teachers' support for applied research competence development might lead to the decreased teachers' motivation to perform applied research and integrate it's results to the study process.
2. Use of the Moodle system is not sufficient, it can not ensure the efficiency of the solutions and tools used in case the study programs corresponding to the study field are implemented in the form of distance learning.

## 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

Study provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes, because in order to attain the learning outcomes of the study program "Medicine" (for example, learning outcome number 5, „the graduate evaluates the situation by motive, provides emergency medical aid to patients of all ages and sexes in situations when there is a threat to health or life, prescribes medication to the patient, including highly effective medications“), the College was the first education institution in Latvia to have an EMS vehicle model installed, which since then has been used to develop students' skills of emergency medical aid algorithms and other practical skills (SAR, Part II, paragraph 3.3.1.). Additionally there are fully equipped classes for studying Anatomy, Emergency Medical Aid, Simulation of injection techniques and measurement of vital signs of the patient. There are separate fully equipped premises for practicing bandaging techniques, surgical manipulations and tissue suturing techniques.

The IT system installed in the room enables playing video recordings showing various surgical manipulations (see SAR, Part II, Annex 50).

Science provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. Despite the fact there is no separate funding for the applied research, the teaching staff in the study programme Medicine, Physician's Assistant Qualification (Joint Opinion Report, 2.4. Teaching Staff, Criterion 2.4.4.) is fully compliant with the requirement in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, particularly has published in peer-reviewed editions in the period of last six years or has at least five years of practical experience (except for experience in the implementation of the study programme). The weakness related with the lack of separate funding for the applied research and the recommendation (Recommendation number 7 Additional motivating mechanisms encouraging teachers to get involved in scientific research activity, must be implemented. The criteria for the assessment of the teachers' involvement in scientific research, must be developed) is already in the Study Field analysis part.

Informative provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, because the College library offers students of the physician assistant program books on emergency medical aid, rehabilitation, surgery, disaster medicine, etc., theses, scientific research and methodological materials as well as medical periodicals. Students have access to systematized electronic open-access resources (e-books, e-journals, databases in disaster medicine, first aid, emergency medical aid, rehabilitation, physical therapy, resources in evidence-based medicine, health care, medical statistics, and digital resources of LNL) (SAR, Part II, paragraph 3.3.1.).

Technical provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, because computers and multimedia resources, the wireless Internet, computer classroom, library and reading room, study and methodological materials (hard covers and electronic format; CDs, DVDs) are used in the study process (see SAR, Part II, paragraph 3.3.1). Moodle system was shortly demonstrated during the tour of the facilities at the College. Yet, the academic staff members (03.24, study program „Medicine“ (41721) with a qualification of a physician's assistant) said some of them use Moodle, but it is up to the teacher to use Moodle or not. When the use of Moodle system is left for a free choice, the College can not ensure the

efficiency of the solutions and tools used in case the study programmes corresponding to the study field are implemented in the form of distance learning (see the Paragraph 1.3.4. in the Joint Opinion Report).

Financial provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, because (1) the state funding in the study program "Medicine" (physician assistant) was gradually increasing in the period from 2017 to 2020. (2) The interconnection of the study programs included in the study direction ensures that a substantial portion of the material and technical provision purchased at the College (teaching equipment, practical manipulation rooms, mock-ups, simulation mannequins, whiteboards, etc.) is successfully used not only in one but in several study programs (SAR, Part II, paragraph 3.3.3), it means the study programs are run in the profitable way.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. The elected academic staff and guest lecturers participate in the implementation of the aim of the study program, which is to train a medical practitioner with the qualification of physician assistant.

- Total number of teaching staff: 30 educators per 6.71 academic staff rate
- Academic staff: 2 senior lecturers, 9 lecturers
- Guest lecturers: 19

Annex 47 provides information on the teaching staff involved in the study program "Medicine" (41721) awarding the qualification of the physician assistant. Information on the education of the teaching staff is provided in Annex 9 "Basic information on the teaching staff involved in the study direction".

Most of the teaching staff implementing the study program are practicing health care professionals, including clinic doctors, surgeons, family doctors, psychiatrists, EMS team medical practitioners, etc. The expertise of these professionals allows students to gain comprehensive knowledge of the profession. The basic composition of the elected academic staff of the study program was formed through elections in 2013 and subsequently in the elections of 2019 for the period of 6 years until 2025. (SAR, p. 147-148). In 2019, many educators working in the study program completed studies in the further professional development program "Higher Education Didactics: Contemporary Theories and Practice". All teaching staff participate in professional seminars and training courses (Annex 9). The College promotes close cooperation with the EMS, Association of Emergency Medicine, Latvian Society of Physicians (in continuing education programs), Latvian Society of Outpatient Medical Assistants and other professional medical and health care associations. Annex 47 provides information on the teaching staff involved in the study program "Medicine" (41721) awarding the qualification of the physician assistant. Information on the education of the teaching staff is provided in Annex 9 "Basic information on the teaching staff involved in the study direction". Qualifications of the teaching staff such as academic staff and guest lecturers teaching in the study program comply with the conditions of the study program implementation and the requirements of regulatory enactments (Annex 43, annex 44). The teaching staff regularly update the content of study courses, taking into account the requirements and current developments on the labor market (Annex 13).

2.4.2. Changes in the composition of the teaching staff most often pertain to invited guest lecturers. This provides the College with an opportunity either to replace a lecturer from the elected group of the teaching staff in the relevant thematic cycle/study course or to ensure the implementation of a highly specific study course (SAR, 3.4.2, p.148). In 2013 and 2019, the College organized the

elections of the academic staff through a competition, which led to the six-year change in the basic composition of the academic staff. In addition to the elected teaching staff, the program recruits recognized medical practitioners as guest lecturers, who, by being practitioners in their areas of specialization, are able to enrich the content of study courses with real life medical cases, thus, creating a study context that is similar to the real-life professional environment of a physician assistant. Changes in the composition of the teaching staff most often pertain to invited guest lecturers. This provides the College with an opportunity either to replace a lecturer from the elected group of the teaching staff in the relevant thematic cycle/study course or to ensure the implementation of a highly specific study course. By attracting new lecturers, the study program creates more opportunities for the acquisition of new information and enhances the overall quality of the studies.

#### 2.4.3 Not applicable.

2.4.4. The analysis of the Academic Staff CV (SAR, Annex 10) was performed. It can be concluded that 2 teachers do not comply with the requirements (peer-reviewed editions published in the last six years or 5-years practical work experience obtained, except for experiences in the implementation of the study programme).

One of the teachers, who do not comply with the requirements, is teaching Psychology of Communication in the study programme Medicine with Physician assistant qualification. From CV looks that lecturer took part in a few conferences and his research area are problems of medical ethics. Yet, in self SAR there was no evidence of persons' scientific publications in peer-reviewed editions, including international editions or information regarding practical experience in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Given that these are not specific specializations (medical courses) and that this is a college level, it can be assumed that there may not be high-level publications in internationally cited journals, while the courses taught play an important role in the health care curriculum. Therefore, in the future it is necessary to find a solution and support for the lecturer to perform scientific activities or gain professional experience in accordance with the taught courses.

The second teacher who do not comply with the requirements, is teaching Surgical propaedeutics in the study programme Medicine with Physician assistant qualification.

From CV and SAR there was no evidence of persons' scientific publications in peer-reviewed editions, including international editions or information regarding practical experience in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

At the same time, it is stated that person is a resident doctor in the same field as the taught study course. From the experts' point of view, it is clear that the resident does not yet have internationally cited publications. The involvement of such teachers forms a generation of staff that is well appreciated.

Yet, to make sure that information provided in this study course is in line with labor market requirements and scientific trends, additional support should be aligned to an academic staff member as well as additional motivation and support to conduct research.

Taking into account that a national strategic objectives for first level professional higher education are [1] to prepare a student for work in a specific profession, promoting the improvement of him or her as a mentally and physically developed, free, responsible and creative personality; [2] to promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills (also skills for independent learning), that ensures the obtaining of the fourth level professional qualification and promotes competitiveness in changeable socio-economic conditions; [3]

to create motivation for continuing education and provide an opportunity to prepare for obtaining the second level professional higher education and the fifth level professional qualification. It could be appreciated that a large part of the program has professionals with practical experience in the



field.

Concluding the analysis results, the teaching staff of the study programme Medicine, Physician's Assistant Qualification fully compliant with the requirement in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, particularly has published in peer-reviewed editions in the period of last six years or has at least five years of practical experience (except for experience in the implementation of the study programme).

2.4.5. College has developed a mechanism for mutual cooperation of the teaching staff in the implementation of the study programme. It ensures the achievement of the aims of the study programme and the interconnection of study courses within the study programme. The teaching staff of the program participate in general meetings of all the teaching 150 staff of the College, which are organized 3 times a year: at the beginning of the academic year, at the end of the first semester and at the end of the second semester. The teaching staff are informed on the level of attainment of study aims and learning outcomes in the previous academic period, receive information about the planned activities and set expenses for the new academic year. The acting head of the Medicine and Pharmacy Department I. Indrāne and the teaching staff of the department discuss further development and implementation of the study program at the methodological meeting of the department (design/renewal of the study environment, current developments in the study field, updating study course contents and study course interconnection, ensuring academic succession). (See SAR p.149-150). Mid-term results of students' progress are discussed at least twice a year (as of November 1 and April 1), which allows to identify problems in the implementation of the study program and determine the set of measures to be taken to handle difficulties, which leads to the decrease in the number of student dropping-out of the study program, especially in the first year of studies. For more information, see criterion 2.3.6 of section "Resources and Provision of the Study Direction" in Chapter II.

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

There are no specific shortcomings indicated for 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. Everything is in order and in compliance with the criteria.

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 enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

College organized the elections of the academic staff through a competition, which led to the six-year change in the basic composition of the academic staff. In addition to the elected teaching staff, the program recruits recognized medical practitioners as guest lecturers, who, by being practitioners in their areas of specialization.

The teaching staff are informed on the level of attainment of study aims and learning outcomes in the previous academic period, receive information about the planned activities and set expenses for the new academic year.

Strengths:

1. The fact that the qualification of the teaching staff is directly related to learning outcomes is confirmed by the quantitative and qualitative indicators of the midterm and final assessment, as

well as the feedback of students, graduates and employers.

2. Qualifications of the teaching staff such as academic staff and guest lecturers teaching in the study program comply with the conditions of the study program implementation and the requirements of regulatory enactments.

3. The teaching staff regularly update the content of study courses, taking into account the requirements and current developments on the labor market. (see criterion 2.3.6 of section “Resources and Provision of the Study Direction” in Chapter II).

Weaknesses: no weaknesses identified

### **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

Qualifications of the teaching staff such as academic staff and guest lecturers teaching in the study program comply with the conditions of the study program implementation and the requirements of regulatory enactments.

(See Annex 43, 44)

## **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

Study programme complies with the professional Higher Education standard regulated by Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 141 “Regulations regarding the state standard in the first-level professional higher education”. Total amount of CP in Study programme 120 CP length of implementation 3 years, CP are divided as follows: 21 CP allocated to overall educational study courses (including business Module 6 CP), 68 CP allocated to specific field study courses (including study courses Civil Protection (1 CP) and Environmental Education and Hygiene (1 CP)). Internship 20 CP and 8 CP for qualification work. Also includes 3 CP for optional study courses. Based on the information provided by LU RFMK, experts find that other requirements specified in the regulations are also met.

ANNEX 43. Compliance of the study program with the National Education Standard\_ Physician assistant (2).docx.pdf

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Study programme complies with a valid profession standard which can be found here:

<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/ps0262.pdf>. Standard for physician assistant was approved on 14th of September 2011. Each competence in standard has been

coupled with appropriate study courses. See: ANNEX 44. Compliance of the study program with the Profession Standard\_ Physician assistant .pdf

Yet, LU RFMC should take into account that a new version of the professional standard is currently being developed and the compliance of the programme with the new professional standard should be reviewed as soon as the standard will be approved.

- 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

Attached study course descriptions ( ANNEX 48\_STUDY COURSES\_Physician assistant.pdf) comply with regulations set forth in Law of Higher Education Institutions. Yet, experts noticed that mandatory literature in a few study courses are outdated. The list of mandatory literature sources should be updated in the regular review of study course descriptions, as well as it should be ensured that the amount of the list of mandatory literature corresponds to the amount of credit points of the study course.

- 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 (ANNEX 41. Diploma, diploma supplement sample\_Physician assistant.pdf) complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to MK No. 202 “ Procedures for Issuing State-Recognised Documents Attesting Higher Education”.

Yet, title for qualification should be the same as title for relevant professional standard, in this case - Physician Assistant (Paramedic)/ Ārsta palīgs (feldšera). This can be assessed as a technical shortcoming, which the LU RFMC should eliminate, therefore, the experts do not consider that this affects the overall assessment of the requirement.

- 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

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

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

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

ANNEX 11. Knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff.pdf verify that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet of Ministers No.733 of 07/07/2009 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language, the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language and the State Fee for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language".

- 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

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

Sample of attached study agreement complies with Cabinet Regulation No.70 "Mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement" (ANNEX 7. Sample of the Study Agreement.pdf).

- 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

In accordance with the agreement signed by Riga First Medical College of the University of Latvia and Daugavpils Medical College of Daugavpils University on 15/10/2021, students of the study program Medicine (41721) with the qualification of the physician assistant will be provided with study opportunities in the first level professional higher education program Medicine (41721) awarding the qualification of the physician assistant. (Annex 5. Opportunity to continue studies.pdf)

- 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

Annex 6. "Student guarantee on loss compensation.pdf" confirms that the institution guarantees 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

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:** Fully compliant

Study programme corresponds to the requirements set in Cabinet of Ministers No. 268 "Regulations on the Competence of Medical Personnel and Students Acquiring the First or Second Level Professional Higher Education Programs in Medicine and the Amount of Theoretical and Practical Knowledge of these Persons" (ANNEX 45. Compliance of the study program with sector-specific regulatory framework\_ Physician assistant.pdf

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

In general, it must be concluded that the study programme complies with the external regulatory framework. At the same time, there are a couple of aspects that LU RFMC should take into account and improve, for example: the title of the qualification must be specified in the diploma, ensuring that it corresponds to the professional standard. The list of mandatory literature in the course descriptions should be revised to ensure that outdated literature is not included in the course descriptions.

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

Students were happy with their studies, teachers that worked hard to offer a good learning experience and good quality resources and facilities. All of these provide a great foundation for learning professional practice. Students were satisfied with the qualification and experience of the teachers; they confirmed the teachers are collaborative and wishing to share their experience with them. Students gave some examples how they provided their feedback, and the teachers listened to their feedback. The graduates were described by the social partners as innovative and competent in their roles. The experts panel concludes that whilst the student experience and outcomes are good, more effective management and internal quality assurance would enhance their experience.

Strengths:

1. students' satisfaction with the content of the program, provision of internships and attitude of lecturers.
2. the study provision, informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision fully comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study program, create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process.

Weaknesses:

1. incomplete Moodle system and its use in teaching/ learning process,

2. there is no separate funding in the College for the applied research.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Medicine"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Medicine"**

#### **Short-term recommendations**

Until the accreditation of the study field, a specified diploma should be submitted, in which a technical error in the title of the qualification to be awarded has been corrected.

Till the next academic year, the list of mandatory literature included in the study course descriptions should be reviewed, ensuring that the literature is not outdated.

#### **Long-term recommendations**

In case, if new professional standard for study programmes "Medicine" will be approved, LU RFMC have to review the compliance of the study programme with the professional standard and, if necessary, specify programme accordingly.

## **II - "Medicine" ASSESSMENT**

### **II - "Medicine" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

2.1.1. The study program "Medicine" with the qualification of "midwife" complies with the study field of "Health care" indicators, conditions and criteria. The length of the implementation of the study program, which is 3 years, is evaluated as sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and practical experience to enter the labor market.

2.1.2. The title of the higher education institution is LU RFMC in short from Riga First Medical College of the University of Latvia with education classification code 41721. The professional qualification given after finishing the studies at the college of the first level professional higher education study program is the "midwife". Within the 3 years the aim of the study program is to train highly qualified and competitive health care professionals in the field of midwifery that are in demand on the Latvian labor market and that have a solid foundation for lifelong learning in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, standard of the midwife profession and European Union directives. The admission requirements of the study program is the secondary education or secondary vocational education. The study program is offered only for full-time studies and at the end of the studies students must acquire 120 credit points. The implementation language of the program is Latvian only which is justifiable as the students are concentrated to be prepared only for Latvian labor market. It can be stated that all of the indicators are interrelated and effective.

2.1.3. As it is indicated within the SAR p. 111, no corrections have been made within the study program's parameters since the last accreditation process. In this case, there are no corrections that have to be analyzed, justified or supported from the experts side of this accreditation procedure.

2.1.4. According to recent data, it shows that for the safety of Latvian citizens, the number of current midwives is too low. For the purpose of protection and safe child birth of pregnant women,

there are approximately 300 more midwives needed. As it has been stated within the SAR p.112, in 2017, the provision of midwives in Latvia was 22.8 midwives per 100,000 inhabitants, whereas in the EU, this number was 37.9. So, it can be concluded that in Latvia, the labor market is in demand for new midwives/specialists in the field. There is also relevant statistics and data which shows that currently the number of midwives in the over-65 age group is significantly higher than in the 25-40 age group which is also an important indicator that a new generation of midwives is needed for the purpose of labor market circulation and replacement of those midwives that retire.

2.1.5. Not applicable as it is not a joint program.

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

All of the indicators of the study program are in compliance with the existing preconditions of the implementation of the study program. There are no specific shortcomings indicated. Everything is in order and in compliance with the criteria and education standards.

Strengths:

1. High demand of midwives in the labor market;

Weaknesses:

None.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The study programme "Medicine" (41721) with qualification of midwife, is ensured to be topical through involvement of employers so that the demands of the labor market and the newest trends, skills needed are taught to the College students. For example, there are specific changes made within the study courses in order they would be in relation to the latest developments of the industry. According to the SAR p.115 and the onsite visit seeing all the equipment provided to the students, the study course Professional Technical Skills was expanded by patient safety themes, whereas the study course Pregnancy, Childbirth and Postnatal Period was supplemented with the latest fetal monitoring methods used in maternity care, such as STAN, which was introduced to Latvian hospitals relatively recently.

It has to be noted that the study programme and the content of the study courses are implemented and developed considering the aim of a specific study course, learning outcomes and the active profession standard which has been outlined in more detail within the Annex 34. The profession standard is currently being revisited by the work group approved by the board of the Latvian Midwives Association. The study programme complies also with national regulations - state education standard (Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No.141 of March 20, 2001 "Regulations regarding the State Standard for the First Level Professional Higher Education") outlined in Annex 33.

If there are some specific changes needed to be made within the study courses it can be done by the lecturers of the study course individually. Overall, the contents of study courses are reviewed at least once a year but usually prior to the beginning of each semester.

The largest difficulty the College faces is regarding scientific research. Although, the College tries to participate in some ways in these scientific processes. The College manages to take part in research activities related to developments in the health care sciences, focuses on the enhancement of patient care and health maintenance, and effectively contributes to the development and enhancement of the study program and study courses. Academic staff mentioned during onsite visits that they try to participate in scientific conferences and seminars locally and abroad and

transfer the gained knowledge within their study courses and advance their study materials.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. As mentioned within the study field analysis under management of the study field section, teaching staff tries to apply various forms of teaching methods within the study process. To mention a few, there are interactive lectures, practical interactive classes, seminars, independent work implemented to broaden the skills of the students in various ways. In such a way students develop their problem - solving skills, interaction skills, presentation skills and analytical skills. For the purpose of practical skill gaining the training rooms are used with all the available equipment including dolls, mannequins and available tools.

Of course, the College admitted that the Covid situation radically influenced how to provide practical skills towards students as the majority of lectures took place remotely through ZOOM, Google Meet or Whatsapp. During onsite visit, teaching staff and students confirmed that the lectures are of various differences and provided in an interactive way. From those meetings also became clear that currently Moodle platform is not very actively used for various purposes and its full capacity. There is some information provided there and tools of studies but other platforms are a substantial part of the study process as well.

2.2.4. An internship is marked as an important part of the study programme. According to the SAR pp.118-119, the College provides students with various types of internships in medical institutions. Prior to the internship, students have to take a test to verify the theoretical foundation of their practical skills, which is evidence for their readiness to perform internship tasks. After the internship, the College organizes the internship examination, which includes the summary of the internship experience and results, analysis of the acquired new skills and conclusions for further professional actions. During the onsite visit, students mentioned a lot of opportunities and provision of internship offered to them and outlined that the College is actively participating in the process of internship provision. The tasks of the internship are related to the learning outcomes achievable. The internship complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments as outlined within the Annex 39 - Regulations of the first level professional higher education internships of Riga First Medical College of the University of Latvia.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6 In general, the final paper thesis is a very important component of the study programme. The topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme and are updated every year according to the trends in the field. According to the SAR pp.120-121, all of the topics chosen are topical for the labor market and the health care sector. In fact, the topics of the final papers have been developed as a result of collaborative efforts of students and academic staff.

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

The content of the first level higher education programme "Medicine" (41721) with qualification of a midwife, is relevant and contemporary. The study programme content meets the needs of the industry and demands for the preparation of the specialists who can work after graduation as highly skilled professionals. One of the largest difficulties of the College is the scientific research, although the academic staff tries to participate in various seminars and conferences to improve their skills and knowledge. As the College is in a transition period and the complete implementation of the Moodle environment, it is expected that in the future it has fully transitioned itself to Moodle. The College is actively involved in providing internships to students after every study year.

Strengths:

1. Students' satisfaction with the content of the program and provision of internships;



2. The content of the study programme meets the industry needs and demands;

Weaknesses:

1. Incomplete Moodle system implementation and its use in teaching/ learning process;
2. Lack of scientific research involvement.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not relevant

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

### **Analysis**

2.3.1. The study base of the LU RFMC program "Medicine" with the professional qualification of the midwife, which includes relevant structural units (departments, groups of lecturers, etc.) and the necessary support staff, complies with the conditions of implementation of the study program. The informational and methodological provision, databases and the literature available at the library comply with the conditions of implementation of the study program. The material and technical provision and its availability to students and teaching staff comply with the specifications and implementation of the study program (SAR, Part III, paragraph 3.3.1.).

Studies are ensured with the methodological provision and study materials that correspond to the professional aims, contents and learning outcomes of the study program and that are regularly updated and supplemented. Students have the opportunity to use study resources created by their teaching staff in the e-environment. Computers and multimedia resources, the wireless Internet, computer classroom, library and reading room, study and methodological materials (hard covers and electronic format; CDs, DVDs) are used in the study process. The resources published in the e-environment as well as the use of information and communication technologies in consultations enable the acquisition of specific study themes independently of the College context (SAR, Part III, paragraph 3.3.1.).

The College's library offers midwifery students books, medical periodicals, systematic open-access electronic resources (e-books, e-journals, obstetrics and gynecology databases) on obstetric physiology, gynecological pathologies, diagnostics and treatment principles, and offers resources on evidence-based medicine, health care, medical statistics, and digital resources of the Latvian National Library (LNL) (SAR, Part III, paragraph 3.3.1.).

The College has equipped lecture halls and training rooms with proper equipment and other material resources most of which have been purchased using the STEM and ERDF funds as well as College's own revenues (SAR, Part III, paragraph 3.3.1., Annex 40. Material and technical provision for the study programme „Medicine“ with the qualification of a midwife).

During the reporting period, the College implemented the project of the ERDF action program "Infrastructure and Services", and specifically the action of "Modernization of Higher Education Institutions' Premises and Equipment to Improve the Quality of Study Programs, Including the Provision of Opportunities to Acquire Educational Programs for Persons with Functional Disabilities". The outcome was highly successful, which was confirmed by the conclusions of the project supervisory institutions, and by the following material and technical benefits gained by the College: 8 renovated specialized training rooms for midwifery studies, the acquired childbirth simulation

mannequin NOELLE (mother + child) and a baby mannequin, the newborn mannequin LAERDAL, etc. (SAR, Part III, paragraph 3.3.1.).

The outcome of the implementation of the STEM project of 2018 - 2020 was the set-up of a modern training room "Newborn Intensive Care Unit", which is functionally connected to the delivery room and neonatal resuscitation. The aim of the unit is to immerse students in a life-like situation, when it is necessary to show how to deliver a baby, and if necessary, to immediately place the newborn on a special modern resuscitation table to apply resuscitation measures. This table and the mannequin are connected to a simulator whose indicators can be adjusted to a specific clinical situation by a lecturer so that students can be trained how to act under such conditions. In 2020, a new mannequin was installed within the STEM project - a delivery stimulator for the acquisition of gynecological and delivery skills (SAR, Part III, paragraph 3.3.1.).

The provision of the IT infrastructure at LU RFMC is described in more detail in criterion 2.3.2 in Section 3 of Chapter II. Training rooms contain various material resources for training and host situational tasks. The library resources are described in criterion 2.3.3 in Section 3 of Chapter II.

On the tour of the facilities the College demonstrated a wide variety of the equipment used for the achievement of the study results.

There is a system functioning in the College for determining the needs of resources (equipment, literature resources) for implementation of the study field. The directors of the study programs „Medicine“ (41721) with qualification of a physician's assistant and a midwife explained that in the beginning of every academic year the list of the needed resources is being prepared, and the prioritization is being performed in case of restricted funding.

The library resources should ensure the accessibility to English textbooks (the newest editions) to be sure students are receiving up to date information. However, this might be the issue because the academic staff members (study program „Medicine“ (41721) with a qualification of a midwife) could not recommend the textbook (midwifery) in English, so no possibility to be up to date. The explanation was the teachers were not specialized in the area.

There were some issues noticed that some study subjects in the study program „Medicine“ (41721) with qualification of a midwife were taught by obstetricians, not midwives.

#### 2.3.2. Not applicable

2.3.3. The financial provision and the costs of the study program are aligned with the needs of the study program and the conditions of study program implementation. The financial resources of the study field include the state budget funds and own revenues. The available financial resources ensure the implementation of the study program and the attainment of learning outcomes.

Number of the study places financed by the state budget in the study program (SAR, Part III, paragraph 3.3.3., Table 21 „State budget expenditure per student of the study program "Medicine" (midwife) in 2020“) was 67. Total study expenses per student per year, consisting of salary per 1 student per year (61.19%), compulsory employer's state social insurance contributions (14.74%), payment for services – management of the building, infrastructure development (15.32%), modernization of teaching equipment, purchase of teaching materials and equipment (5.82%), acquisition of fixed assets (2.93%) are provided in SAR, Part III, paragraph 3.3.3., Table 23.

The interconnection of the study programs included in the study field ensures that a substantial portion of the material and technical provision purchased at the College (teaching equipment, practical manipulation rooms, mock-ups, simulation mannequins, whiteboards, etc.) is successfully used not only in one but in several study programs.

Minimum number of students in the study program to ensure the profitability of the study program (SAR, Part III, paragraph 3.3.3., Table 21.1.) is 99 in the study program „Medicine“ (physician assistant), 64 in the study program „Medicine“ (midwife) and 93 in the study program „Pharmacy“ (pharmacy assistant).

There is no separate funding in the College for the applied research. Some teachers confirmed the College supports them in the process of scientific research competence development. However it is

not clear if this kind of support is effective (see the Paragraph 1.3.1. in the Joint Report). Lack of the separate funding for the applied research and systematic teachers' support for applied research competence development might lead to the decreased teachers' motivation to perform applied research and integrate it's results to the study process.

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

The study provision, informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study program „Medicine with Qualification – Midwife“, create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process.

However there is no separate funding in the College for the applied research. Some teachers confirmed the College supports them in the process of scientific research competence development. However it is not clear if the system for funding scientific research is effective.

Lack of the separate funding for the applied research and systematic teachers' support for applied research competence development might lead to the decreased teachers' motivation to perform applied research and integrate it's results to the study process.

The funding available to the study program, funding sources and the use of funding ensures full implementation of the study process, the study program has the minimum number of students to ensure the profitability of the study program and facilitates the development of the study program.

#### **Strengths**

1. The study programme is fully equipped with the material, informative, technical resources, they are accessible and fully complying with the learning outcomes.
2. The funding to the study programme for the provision by material, informative, technical resources, is sufficient. The study programme is being implemented in the profitable way.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. Lack of the separate funding for the applied research and systematic teachers' support for applied research competence development might lead to the decreased teachers' motivation to perform applied research and integrate it's results to the study process.

### **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

Study provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes, because during the reporting period the College implemented the project of the ERDF action program "Infrastructure and Services", and specifically the action of "Modernization of Higher Education Institutions' Premises and Equipment to Improve the Quality of Study Programs, Including the Provision of Opportunities to Acquire Educational Programs for Persons with Functional Disabilities", and as the outcome of the project, following material and technical benefits were obtained by the College: 8 renovated specialized training rooms for midwifery studies, the acquired childbirth simulation mannequin NOELLE (mother + child) and a baby mannequin, the newborn mannequin LAERDAL, etc. (SAR,

Part III, paragraph 3.3.1.). The outcome of the implementation of the STEM project of 2018 - 2020 was the set-up of a modern training room "Newborn Intensive Care Unit", which is functionally connected to the delivery room and neonatal resuscitation. The modernization of the equipment directly complies with the learning outcomes of the study programme Medicine, qualification Midwife, particularly learning outcome number 4 - „To apply pre-, clinical and post-clinical care to a woman and her newborn and to document the patient care process in accordance with the medical and record keeping procedures of medical institutions“. Additionally there are fully equipped classes for studying Anatomy, Emergency Medical Aid, Newborn Intensive Care Room, Hygiene Room, Delivery and Gynecology Room, Manipulations in patient medical care and relevant skill development Room, Surgery Room, etc. (see SAR, Part III, Annex 40).

Science provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. Despite the fact there is no separate funding for the applied research, the teaching staff in the study programme Medicine, Midwife Qualification (Joint Opinion Report, 2.4. Teaching Staff, Criterion 2.4.4.) is fully compliant with the requirement in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, particularly has published in peer-reviewed editions in the period of last six years or has at least five years of practical experience (except for experience in the implementation of the study programme). The weakness related with the lack of separate funding for the applied research and the recommendation (Recommendation number 7 Additional motivating mechanisms encouraging teachers to get involved in scientific research activity, must be implemented. The criteria for the assessment of the teachers' involvement in scientific research, must be developed) is already in the Study Field analysis part.

Informative provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, because the College library offers students of the midwifery students books, medical periodicals, systematic open-access electronic resources (e-books, e-journals, obstetrics and gynecology databases) on obstetric physiology, gynecological pathologies, diagnostics and treatment principles, and offers resources on evidence-based medicine, health care, medical statistics, and digital resources of the Latvian National Library (LNL) (SAR, Part III, paragraph 3.3.1.). The weakness - lack of the textbooks of Midwifery in the English language and recommendation - the library sources should be renewed, mainly focusing on the newest textbooks of Midwifery in English language, are described in the study field assessment part.

Technical provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, because computers and multimedia resources, the wireless Internet, computer classroom, library and reading room, study and methodological materials (hard covers and electronic format; CDs, DVDs) are used in the study process. The resources published in the e-environment as well as the use of information and communication technologies in consultations enable the acquisition of specific study themes independently of the College context (SAR, Part III, paragraph 3.3.1.).

Financial provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, because (1) the state funding in the study program "Medicine" (qualification Midwife) was gradually increasing in the period from 2017 to 2020. (2) The interconnection of the study programs included in the study direction ensures that a substantial portion of the material and technical provision purchased at the College (teaching equipment, practical manipulation rooms, mock-ups, simulation mannequins, whiteboards, etc.) is successfully used not only in one but in several study programs (SAR, Part III, paragraph 3.3.3), it means the study programs are run in the profitable way.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme. Of the teaching staff involved in the study program, 14 are midwives and 6 are practicing gynecologists. The expertise of these professionals allows students to gain comprehensive knowledge of the profession. The basic composition of the elected academic staff of the study program was formed through elections in 2013 and subsequently in the elections of 2019 for the period of 6 years until 2025. (SAR, p.125).

The elected academic staff and guest lecturers are involved in the implementation of the aim of the study program, which is to train a medical practitioner with the qualification of the midwife.

- Total number of teaching staff: 32 educators per 4,97 academic staff rate.
- Academic staff: 2 senior lecturers, 8 lecturers
- Guest lecturers: 22.

Academic staff are also encouraged to participate in such events at other institutions in Latvia and in international mobility programs. The College promotes close cooperation with the Latvian Midwives Association and other medical and health care professional associations. Annex 37 provides information on the teaching staff involved in the study program "Medicine" (41721) awarding the qualification of the midwife. Information on the education of the teaching staff is provided in Annex 9 "Basic information on the teaching staff involved in the study direction". The fact that the qualification of the teaching staff is directly related to learning outcomes is confirmed by midterm and final quantitative and qualitative study indicators as well as the feedback of students, graduates and employers. (SAR, p.126) During on-site visits students provided very positive feedback on academic staff and educational programme and provided materials (Annex 8).

2.4.2. Changes in the composition of the teaching staff most often pertain to invited guest lecturers. This provides the College with an opportunity either to replace a lecturer from the elected group of the teaching staff in the relevant thematic cycle/study course or to ensure the implementation of a highly specific study course (SAR, 3.4.2, p.148). By attracting new lecturers, the study program creates more opportunities for the acquisition of new information and enhances the overall quality of the studies.

2.4.3 Not applicable.

2.4.4. The analysis of the Academic Staff CV (SAR, Annex 10) was performed. It can be concluded that 2 teachers do not comply with the requirements (peer-reviewed editions published in the last six years or 5-years practical work experience obtained, except for experiences in the implementation of the study programme).

One of the teachers, who do not comply with the requirements, is teaching Ethics, Communication, Psychology, Basics of Sociology and Social medicine in the study programme Medicine with Midwife qualification. From CV looks that lecturer took part in a few conferences and his research area are problems of medical ethics. Yet, in self SAR there was no evidence of persons' scientific publications in peer-reviewed editions, including international editions or information regarding practical experience in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Given that these are not specific specializations (medical courses) and that this is a college level, it can be assumed that there may not be high-level publications in internationally cited journals, while the courses taught play an important role in the health care curriculum. Therefore, in the future it is necessary to find a solution and support for the lecturer to perform scientific activities or gain professional experience in accordance with the taught courses.

The second teacher who do not comply with the requirements, is teaching Surgical extrogenital pathology in the study programme Medicine with Midwife qualification.

From CV and SAR there was no evidence of persons' scientific publications in peer-reviewed editions,

including international editions or information regarding practical experience in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

At the same time, it is stated that person is a resident doctor in the same field as the taught study course. From the experts' point of view, it is clear that the resident does not yet have internationally cited publications. The involvement of such teachers forms a generation of staff that is well appreciated.

Yet, to make sure that information provided in this study course is in line with labor market requirements and scientific trends, additional support should be aligned to an academic staff member as well as additional motivation and support to conduct research.

Taking into account that a national strategic objectives for first level professional higher education are [1] to prepare a student for work in a specific profession, promoting the improvement of him or her as a mentally and physically developed, free, responsible and creative personality; [2] to promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills (also skills for independent learning), that ensures the obtaining of the fourth level professional qualification and promotes competitiveness in changeable socio-economic conditions; [3] to create motivation for continuing education and provide an opportunity to prepare for obtaining the second level professional higher education and the fifth level professional qualification. It could be appreciated that a large part of the program has professionals with practical experience in the field.

Concluding the analysis results, the teaching staff of the study programme Medicine, Midwife Qualification fully compliant with the requirement in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, particularly has published in peer-reviewed editions in the period of last six years or has at least five years of practical experience (except for experience in the implementation of the study programme).

2.4.5. College has developed a mechanism for mutual cooperation of the teaching staff in the implementation of the study programme. It ensures the achievement of the aims of the study programme and the interconnection of study courses within the study programme. For more information, see criterion 2.3.6 of section "Resources and Provision of the Study Direction" in Chapter II.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses:

There are no specific shortcomings indicated for 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. Everything is in order and in compliance with the criteria.

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 enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

College organized the elections of the academic staff through a competition, which led to the six-year change in the basic composition of the academic staff. In addition to the elected teaching staff, the program recruits recognized medical practitioners as guest lecturers, who, by being practitioners in their areas of specialization.

The teaching staff are informed on the level of attainment of study aims and learning outcomes in the previous academic period, receive information about the planned activities and set expenses for the new academic year.

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

There are no specific shortcomings indicated for 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. Everything is in order and in compliance with the criteria.

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 enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

Taking into account that a national strategic objectives for first level professional higher education it could be appreciated that a large part of the program has professionals with practical experience in the field.

Strengths:

1. The fact that the qualification of the teaching staff is directly related to learning outcomes is confirmed by the quantitative and qualitative indicators of the midterm and final assessment, as well as the feedback of students, graduates and employers.
2. Qualifications of the teaching staff such as academic staff and guest lecturers teaching in the study program comply with the conditions of the study program implementation and the requirements of regulatory enactments.
3. The teaching staff regularly update the content of study courses, taking into account the requirements and current developments on the labor market. (see criterion 2.3.6 of section "Resources and Provision of the Study Direction" in Chapter II).

Weaknesses: no weaknesses were identified

## 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

Qualifications of the teaching staff such as academic staff and guest lecturers teaching in the study program comply with the conditions of the study program implementation and the requirements of regulatory enactments. All requirements are fulfilled.

(See Annex 33, Annex 34).

## 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

Study programme complies with the professional Higher Education standard regulated by Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 141 "Regulations regarding the state standard in the first-level professional higher education". Total amount of CP in Study programme 120 CP length of

implementation 3 years, CP are divided as follows: 21 CP allocated to general study courses (including business Module 6 CP), 65 CP allocated to specific field study courses (including study course Environmental Education and Hygiene (1 CP)). Programme also includes study course Civil Protection (1 CP).

Internship 22 CP and 8 CP for qualification work. Also includes 2 CP for optional/elective study courses. Based on the information provided by LU RFMK, experts find that other requirements specified in the regulations are also met.

ANNEX 33. Compliance of the study program with National Education Standard\_Midwife.pdf

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Experts found that standard was approved a long time ago, the profession standard is currently being revisited by the work group approved by the board of the Latvian Midwives Association. Yet, the Ministry of Health has indicated that this professional standard should be looked at in conjunction with the undergraduate midwifery professional standard, as changes in the health care system and society as a whole have significantly changed the role of midwives, requiring additional competencies such as decision-making and physiological pregnancy, the ability to independently consult, assess and analyze sexual and reproductive health.

LU RFMC should closely monitor and possibly engage in the question of what the role of a midwife in the overall framework should look like in the future and review the compliance of the programme with the new requirements after the approval of a new standard.

- 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

Attached study course descriptions (ANNEX 38.DESCRPTION OF THE STUDY COURSE\_Midwife .pdf) comply with regulations set forth in Law of Higher Education Institutions.

To ensure that students get the most up-to-date information, it would be advisable to ensure the accessibility to English textbooks (the newest editions).

- 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 (ANNEX 31. Diploma , diploma supplement sample \_Midwife.pdf) complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to MK No. 202 " Procedures for Issuing State-Recognised Documents Attesting 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

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

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

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

ANNEX 11. Knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff.pdf verify that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet of Ministers No.733 of 07/07/2009 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language, the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language and the State Fee for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language".

- 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

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

Sample of attached study agreement complies with Cabinet Regulation No.70 "Mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement" (ANNEX 7. Sample of the Study Agreement.pdf).

- 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

Students of the study program Medicine (41721) of Riga First Medical College of the University of Latvia awarding the qualification of the midwife will be provided with opportunities to continue their studies in the study field "Health Care" at Riga First Medical College of the

University of Latvia, and specifically, in the study program Medicine (41721) awarding the qualification of the physician assistant. (Annex 5. Opportunity to continue studies.pdf)

- 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

Annex 6. "Student guarantee on loss compensation.pdf" confirms that the institution guarantees 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

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:** Fully compliant

Study programme corresponds to the requirements set in Cabinet of Ministers No. 268 "Regulations on the Competence of Medical Personnel and Students Acquiring the First or Second Level Professional Higher Education Programs in Medicine and the Amount of Theoretical and Practical Knowledge of these Persons" (ANNEX 35\_Compliance of the study program with the sector-specific regulatory framework\_Midwife.pdf)

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

In general, it must be concluded that the study programme complies with the external regulatory framework.

In order to ensure that the programme continues to meet the requirements of the labor market and the needs of the sector, LU RFMC should monitor the progress regarding the issue of the further development of midwife qualifications, with changes to the programme if necessary.

In order for students to obtain the most up-to-date information, it is necessary to review the possibilities to supplement the literature with the latest sources in English.

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

In general the study program fulfills the requirements corresponding to the study program.

Strengths:

1. Academic staff qualifications are compliant with requirements specified in regulatory enactments.
2. The study provision, informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision fully comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of

the study program, create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process.

3. The funding available to the study program, funding sources and the use of funding ensures full implementation of the study process, the study program has the minimum number of students to ensure the profitability of the study program.

4. Students' satisfaction with the content of the program, provision of internships and attitude of lecturers.

Weaknesses:

1. There is no separate funding in the College for the applied research. Some teachers confirmed the College supports them in the process of scientific research competence development. However it is not clear if the system for funding scientific research is effective.

2. Lack of English textbooks needed in the study program Midwife.

3. There is no separate funding in the College for the applied research.

4. Incomplete Moodle system and its use in teaching/ learning process.

## **Evaluation of the study programme "Medicine"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Medicine"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

### **Long-term recommendations**

1. To find an opportunity to gradually supplement the literature with sources in English, thus providing students with the latest information, as well as strengthening students' knowledge of English in a specific field.

2. In case, if new professional standard for qualification "midwife" will be approved, LU RFMC have to review the compliance of the study programme with the professional standard and, if necessary, specify programme accordingly.

## **II - "Pharmacy" ASSESSMENT**

### **II - "Pharmacy" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

2.1.1. The study program of "Pharmacy" with the qualification of "pharmacist assistant" complies with the study field of "Health care" indicators, conditions and criteria. The length of the implementation of the study program, which is 2 years and 6 months, is evaluated as sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and practical experience to enter the labor market.

2.1.2. The title of the higher education institution is LU RFMC in short from Riga First Medical College of the University of Latvia with education classification code for this program 41725. The

professional qualification given after finishing the studies at the college of the first level professional higher education study program is the “pharmacist assistant”. Within the 2 years and 6 months the aim of the study program is to train highly qualified and competitive health care professionals in the field of pharmacy that are in demand on the Latvian labor market and that have a solid foundation for lifelong learning in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, standard of the nursing profession and European Union directives. The admission requirements of the study program is the secondary education or secondary vocational education. The study program is offered only for full-time studies and at the end of the studies students must acquire 100 credit points. The implementation language of the program is Latvian only which is justifiable as the students are concentrated to be prepared only for Latvian labor market. It can be stated that all of the indicators are interrelated and effective.

2.1.3. As it is indicated within the SAR p. 90, no corrections have been made within the study program’s parameters since the last accreditation process. In this case, there are no corrections that have to be analyzed, justified or supported from the experts side of this accreditation procedure.

2.1.4. According to the SAR p. 91, currently there are 1,666 pharmacist assistants in Latvia. The available data shows that for 1 pharmacist in Latvia there is 0.8 pharmacist assistant. In the European Union countries, the typical situation is that for 1 pharmacist there usually is 2-4 pharmacist assistants. This statistics is provided by the Pharmacists’ Society of Latvia. Overall, it shows that there is a need and demand for pharmacist assistants in Latvian labor market. Of course, it is possible to open the pharmacist assistant market towards students and graduates of other countries of the EU, but according to PSL it is a threat of the already low numbers of local pharmacist assistant student numbers. Which is also a crucial indicator that over 36% of the pharmacist assistants are over 60 years old and 28% is between the age of 51 to 60. That also shows the demand of new pharmacist assistants when those in the majority retire after the age of 60.

2.1.5. Not applicable as it is not a joint program.

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

All of the indicators of the study program are in compliance with the existing preconditions of the implementation of the study program. There are no specific shortcomings indicated. Everything is in order and in compliance with the criteria and education standards.

Strengths:

1. High demand of pharmacist assistants in the labor market;
2. Compliance of the objectives, aims and other indicators with the outlined criteria;
3. Compliance of the study field with the study program.

Weaknesses:

None.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The content of the study programme “Pharmacy” (41725) awarding the pharmacist assistant qualification gets regularly updated in cooperation of the specialists from the pharmaceutical industry in order to ensure that the content of the study programme is updated and the programme itself topical for the pharma industry and according to its trends. As seen during onsite visit and has been indicated within the SAR p.94, one of the most recent developments that the College has implemented is the study course “Pharmaceutical care” which includes the opportunity to acquire

patient consultation skills in the environment that is similar to real work environment. The pharmaceutical model includes all the necessary equipment with a variety of pharmaceutical products corresponding to a real open type pharmacy, which is why students have the opportunity to acquire the skills of patient service and consultation by being in an environment adapted to pharmaceutical care contexts.

Due to various recommendations from the employers side, the College implemented various changes within the study programme. For example, two study courses were taken out from the programme: 1. "Nutritional Supplements and 2. "Introduction to Culturology" and two new courses were introduced: 1. "Civil Defense" and 2. "E-health".

Overall, the aim of the study program and the contents of study courses are in compliance with the professional standard of the pharmacist assistant and meet the needs of the labor market. The contents of study courses are developed considering the aims of study courses, their tasks and learning outcomes. Importantly, the contents of the study course has been developed in line with the current profession standard of the pharmacist assistant which is accessible in the Annex 25. As stated within the SAR p.90, specialists are trained in compliance with the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, the needs of the Latvian labor market, professional standards and European Union directives. The learning outcomes of the study program have been developed in compliance with the Profession Standard of the Republic of Latvia and professional standards of professional associations as Pharmacists' Society of Latvia and employer organizations. Study programme awarding the pharmacist assistant qualification complies with national regulations - state education standard (Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No.141 of March 20, 2001 "Regulations regarding the State Standard for the First Level Professional Higher Education" accessible in the Annex 24 as well as the professional (occupational) standard or professional qualification requirements accessible in Annex 25.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. Students are evaluated in all study courses via the assessment types outlined in course descriptions. Final assessments cover theoretical knowledge and practical skills and include independent work and the final course exam or test. As stated within the SAR p. 95, various modern study methods are used, such as lectures, seminars, situational tasks, independent work and presentations. Classes are delivered by both the elected academic staff of the College and invited specialists practicing in the field and holding relevant education, such as pharmacists, physicians, biologists, chemists, representatives of humanities and social sciences as well.

Of course, the College admitted that the Covid situation radically influenced how to provide practical skills towards students as the majority of lectures took place remotely through ZOOM, Google Meet or Whatsapp. During onsite visit, teaching staff and students confirmed that the lectures are of various differences and provided in an interactive way. From those meetings also became clear that currently Moodle platform is not very actively used for various purposes and its full capacity. There is some information provided there and tools of studies but other platforms are a substantial part of the study process as well.

2.2.4. An internship is marked as an important part of the study programme. Students acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical skills consistent with the profession standard to be awarded the qualification of the pharmacist assistant that is why internship is crucial. According to the SAR p.96, The College provides students of all study programs of the study direction, including pharmacist assistants, with 100% internships, offering the opportunity to complete internships closer to the place of residence or in a network of pharmacies of the student's choice. During an onsite visit with the students, they mentioned a lot of opportunities and provision of internship offered to them. The College closely cooperates with all major pharmacy networks in Latvia, providing high quality of internship as "Sentor Farm aptiekas", "BENU Aptieka Latvija", "Euroaptieka", "A Aptiekas". The tasks of the internship are related to the learning outcomes achievable. The internship complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments mentioned in the Annex 30 - Regulations of the first level

professional higher education internships of Riga First Medical College of the University of Latvia.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. The topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme which in detail are described in SAR pp 96-97. During the reporting period, there was a tendency for students to choose thesis themes pertaining to pharmaceutical care, pharmacognosy, pharmacology and practical pharmacy, such as "Pharmaceutical Care in Case of Lactose Intolerance", "Pharmaceutical Care in Case of Migraine", "Cryotherapy in Pharmaceutical Care and Dermatology". For example, the choice of the thesis theme is affected by current events in the field, experience gained in internship and knowledge, skills and cognitions received in theoretical classes. During the reporting period, there was a tendency for students to choose thesis themes pertaining to pharmaceutical care, pharmacognosy, pharmacology and practical pharmacy.

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

The content of the first level higher education programme "Pharmacy" (41725) awarding the pharmacist assistant qualification, is relevant and contemporary. The study programme content meets the needs of the industry and demands for the preparation of the specialists who can work after graduation as highly skilled professionals. As the College is in a transition period and the complete implementation of the Moodle environment, it is expected that in the future it has fully transitioned itself to Moodle. The College is actively involved in providing internships to students after every study year.

Strengths:

1. Students' satisfaction with the content of the program and provision of internships;
2. The content of the study programme meets the industry needs and demands;

Weaknesses:

1. Incomplete Moodle system implementation and its use in teaching/ learning process;

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not relevant.

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

### **Analysis**

2.3.1. The study base of the LU RFMC program "Pharmacy" with the professional qualification of a pharmacist assistant, which includes relevant structural units (departments, groups of lecturers, etc.) and the necessary support staff, complies with the conditions for the implementation of the study program. The information and methodological base, databases and literature available in the library also comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study program. The financial base and the costs of the study program correspond to the needs of the study program and the conditions of study program implementation. The material and technical base and its availability to students and teaching staff ensure the implementation of the study program consistent with its specifications.

The study process is ensured with a methodological base corresponding to the professional aims of

the study program, its content and expected learning outcomes and study materials, which are regularly updated and supplemented. Students enjoy the opportunity to use study resources created by their instructors in the e-environment. Computers and multimedia resources, the wireless Internet, computer classroom, library and reading room, study and methodological materials (hard covers and electronic format; CDs, DVDs) are used in the study process. The resources published in the e-environment, on the one hand, and the use of information and communication technologies for consultations, on the other hand, facilitate the acquisition of specific study topics outside the College context (SAR, Part IV, paragraph 3.3.1.).

The College library offers students of this program books in practical pharmacology, chemistry, homeopathy, herbal manuals, etc. The library collection is supplemented with the latest book editions and medical periodicals. Students have access to theses, scientific research and methodological materials, other published papers, open-access electronic resources (e-books, e-journals, databases in pharmacy and chemistry, drug registers, e-resources in evidence-based medicine, health care, medical statistics and LNL digital resources) (SAR, Part IV, paragraph 3.3.1.).

To attain the aim of the study program "Pharmacy" and to implement selected teaching methods, the College has properly equipped lecture rooms and training rooms with proper equipment and other material resources most of which have been purchased using the STEM and ERDF funds as well as College own revenues (SAR, Part IV, paragraph 3.3.1.).

The initial stage of the study program is marked by general education courses, which take place in specially equipped lecture rooms and training rooms. These rooms are equipped with multimedia equipment (laptops, interactive whiteboards, projectors for displaying lecture and seminar materials and showing demonstrations, video conferencing systems for participation in conferences, seminars, training sessions). Computer equipment makes it possible to quickly obtain information from the Internet sources and visualize study materials and consequently encourage proper actions, thus, ensuring the implementation of the selected teaching method. The provision of IT infrastructure at LU RFMC is described in more detail in criterion 2.3.2. of Section 3 of Chapter II. Training rooms offer various material resources for the development of necessary professional skills and for completing case studies. Library resources are described in criterion 2.3.3 in Section 3 in Chapter II.

On the tour of the facilities the College demonstrated a wide variety of the equipment used for the achievement of the study results.

Awareness about the sufficiency of the material resources is assessed by the surveys and other forms of the feedback got from the teachers. The teachers always confirm the resources are sufficient for the study program (meeting with the Director of the study program „Pharmacy“). Material and technical provision for the study program "Pharmacy" with the qualification of a pharmacist assistant ANNEX 52.

Moodle system and two others are used for remote learning, it was shortly demonstrated during the tour of the facilities at the College.

#### 2.3.2. Not applicable

2.3.3. The financial base and the costs of the study program correspond to the needs of the study program and the conditions of study program implementation. The financial resources of the study direction consist of the state budget funds and own revenues. The available financial resources ensure the implementation of the study program and the attainment of learning outcomes.

Number of the study places financed by the state budget in the study program (SAR, Part IV, paragraph 3.3.3., Table 17 „State budget expenditure per student of the study program "Pharmacy" (pharmacist assistant) in 2020“) was 97. Total study expenses per student per year, consisting of salary per 1 student per year (61.12%), compulsory employer's state social insurance contributions (14.74%), payment for services – management of the building, infrastructure development (15.32%), modernization of teaching equipment, purchase of teaching materials and equipment (5.82%), acquisition of fixed assets (3.00%) are provided in SAR, Part IV, paragraph 3.3.3., Table 17.

The interconnection of the study programs included in the study field ensures that a substantial portion of the material and technical provision purchased at the College (teaching equipment, practical manipulation rooms, mock-ups, simulation mannequins, whiteboards, etc.) is successfully used not only in one but in several study programs.

Minimum number of students in the study program to ensure the profitability of the study program (SAR, Part IV, paragraph 3.3.3., Table 17.1.) is 99 in the study program „Medicine“ (physician assistant), 64 in the study program „Medicine“ (midwife) and 93 in the study program „Pharmacy“ (pharmacy assistant).

There is no separate funding in the College for the applied research. Some teachers confirmed the College supports them in the process of scientific research competence development. However it is not clear if this kind of support is effective (see the Paragraph 1.3.1. in the Joint Report). Lack of the separate funding for the applied research and systematic teachers' support for applied research competence development might lead to the decreased teachers' motivation to perform applied research and integrate it's results to the study process.

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

The study provision, informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the Study Program „Pharmacy with Qualification – Pharmacist Assistant“, create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process.

However there is no separate funding in the College for the applied research. Some teachers confirmed the College supports them in the process of scientific research competence development. However it is not clear if the system for funding scientific research is effective.

Lack of the separate funding for the applied research and systematic teachers' support for applied research competence development might lead to the decreased teachers' motivation to perform applied research and integrate it's results to the study process.

The funding available to the study program, funding sources and the use of funding ensures full implementation of the study process, the study program has the minimum number of students to ensure the profitability of the study program and facilitates the development of the study program.

#### **Strengths**

1. The study programme is fully equipped with the material, informative, technical resources, they are accessible and fully complying with the learning outcomes.
2. The funding to the study programme for the provision by material, informative, technical resources, is sufficient. The study programme is being implemented in the profitable way.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. Lack of the separate funding for the applied research and systematic teachers' support for applied research competence development might lead to the decreased teachers' motivation to perform applied research and integrate it's results to the study process.



## 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

Study provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes, it was demonstrated on the tour of the facilities of the College. Awareness about the sufficiency of the material resources is assessed by the surveys and other forms of the feedback got from the teachers. The teachers always confirm the resources are sufficient for the study program (meeting with the Director of the study program „Pharmacy“). Material and technical provision for the study program “Pharmacy” with the qualification of a pharmacist assistant is provided in details in Annex 52: the specialized fully equipped rooms for studying Anatomy and Physiology, Chemistry, Pharmacology, Pharmaceutical Care, Botany and Pharmacognosy, Pharmaceutical technologies for preparing medications, Emergency Medical Aid, Computer classroom for study course “Information Technologies in Pharmacy. The equipment of the study programme directly complies with the learning outcomes of the study programme Pharmacy, qualification Pharmacist assistant, particularly learning outcome number 6 - „The graduate is able to prepare medicines according to a doctor's specific prescription or a written request of a medical institution“.

Science provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. Despite the fact there is no separate funding for the applied research, the teaching staff in the study programme Pharmacy, Pharmacist Assistant Qualification (Joint Opinion Report, 2.4. Teaching Staff, Criterion 2.4.4.) is fully compliant with the requirement in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, particularly has published in peer-reviewed editions in the period of last six years or has at least five years of practical experience (except for experience in the implementation of the study programme). The weakness related with the lack of separate funding for the applied research and the recommendation (Recommendation number 7 Additional motivating mechanisms encouraging teachers to get involved in scientific research activity, must be implemented. The criteria for the assessment of the teachers' involvement in scientific research, must be developed) is already in the Study Field analysis part.

Informative provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, because the College library offers students of this program books in practical pharmacology, chemistry, homeopathy, herbal manuals, etc. The library collection is supplemented with the latest book editions and medical periodicals. Students have access to theses, scientific research and methodological materials, other published papers, open-access electronic resources (e-books, e-journals, databases in pharmacy and chemistry, drug registers, e-resources in evidence-based medicine, health care, medical statistics and LNL digital resources) (SAR, Part IV, paragraph 3.3.1.).

Technical provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, because computers and multimedia resources, the wireless Internet, computer classroom, library and reading room, study and methodological materials (hard covers and electronic format; CDs, DVDs) are used in the study process. The resources published in the e-environment as well as the use of information and communication technologies in consultations enable the acquisition of specific study themes independently of the College context (SAR, Part IV, paragraph 3.3.1.).

Financial provision is compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, because (1) the state funding in the study program "Pharmacy" (qualification Pharmacist Assistant) was gradually increasing in the period from 2017 to 2020. (2) The interconnection of the study programs included in the study direction ensures that a substantial portion of the material and technical provision purchased at the College (teaching equipment, practical manipulation rooms, mock-ups, simulation mannequins, whiteboards, etc.) is successfully used not only in one but in several study programs (SAR, Part IV, paragraph 3.3.3), it means the study programs are run in the profitable way.

It can be concluded, the deficiencies in science provision could impose a significant risk for the future period in the field of the compliance of the science provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes. That was the reason the requirement was assessed as partially compliant.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

The qualifications of the teaching staff implementing the study program help to effectively achieve the learning outcomes, as the majority of the teaching staff also practice in their specialty and therefore can provide students with up-to-date and practical information related to the course, which creates the study context as close to the everyday work environment as possible. The fact that the qualifications of the teaching staff are relevant to learning outcomes is confirmed by the quantitative and qualitative indicators of the midterm and final assessment outcomes, as well as the feedback of students, graduates and employers. (SAR, p.102). The elected academic staff and guest lecturers are involved in the implementation of the aim of the study program, which is to train a health care professional with the qualification of the pharmacist assistant. To attain the aim of the study program, which is to train health care practitioners with the qualification of a pharmacist assistant, the College employs the elected academic staff and guest lecturers. Some further information on the teaching staff of the study program is provided below:

- Total number of the teaching staff: 18 instructors at the rate of 3.53 academic staff.
- Academic staff - 1 assistant professor and 7 lecturers.
- Guest lecturers - 10

Annex 28 provides information on the teaching staff involved in the study program "Pharmacy" (41725) awarding the qualification of the pharmacist assistant. Information on the education of the teaching staff is provided in Annex 9 "Basic information on the teaching staff involved in the study direction". In the reporting period from 2013 to 2020, there were positive changes, as guest lecturers who are practitioners in the fields related to their study courses had been attracted to the study program. Only a relatively small number of the teaching staff terminated their employment (SAR; p.104).

Changes in the composition of the teaching staff most often pertain to invited guest lecturers. This provides the College with an opportunity either to replace a lecturer from the elected group of the teaching staff in the relevant thematic cycle/study course or to ensure the implementation of a highly specific study course (SAR, 3.4.2, p.148). By attracting new lecturers, the study program creates more opportunities for the acquisition of new information and enhances the overall quality of the studies.

2.4.3 Not applicable.

2.4.4. The analysis of the Academic Staff CV (SAR, Annex 10) was performed. It can be concluded that 1 teacher do not comply with the requirements (peer-reviewed editions published in the last six

years or 5-years practical work experience obtained, except for experiences in the implementation of the study programme).

The teacher is teaching Philosophy; Professional ethics; Basics of professional Law; Business Etiquette in the study programme Pharmacy with Pharmacist Assistant Qualification.

CV looks that lecturer took part in a few conferences and his research area are problems of medical ethics. Yet, in self SAR there was no evidence of persons' scientific publications in peer-reviewed editions, including international editions or information regarding practical experience in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Given that these are not specific specializations (medical courses) and that this is a college level, it can be assumed that there may not be high-level publications in internationally cited journals, while the courses taught play an important role in the health care curriculum. Therefore, in the future it is necessary to find a solution and support for the lecturer to perform scientific activities or gain professional experience in accordance with the taught courses.

Taking into account that a national strategic objectives for first level professional higher education are [1] to prepare a student for work in a specific profession, promoting the improvement of him or her as a mentally and physically developed, free, responsible and creative personality; [2] to promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills (also skills for independent learning), that ensures the obtaining of the fourth level professional qualification and promotes competitiveness in changeable socio-economic conditions; [3] to create motivation for continuing education and provide an opportunity to prepare for obtaining the second level professional higher education and the fifth level professional qualification. It could be appreciated that a large part of the program has professionals with practical experience in the field.

Concluding the analysis results, the teaching staff of the study programme Pharmacy, Pharmacist Assistant Qualification fully compliant with the requirement in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, particularly has published in peer-reviewed editions in the period of last six years or has at least five years of practical experience (except for experience in the implementation of the study programme).

2.4.5 College has developed a mechanism for mutual cooperation of the teaching staff in the implementation of the study programme . It ensures the achievement of the aims of the study programme and the interconnection of study courses within the study programme. For more information, see criterion 2.3.6 of section "Resources and Provision of the Study Direction" in Chapter II.

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

There are no specific shortcomings indicated for 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. Everything is in order and in compliance with the criteria.

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 enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

Taking into account that a national strategic objectives for first level professional higher education it could be appreciated that a large part of the program has professionals with practical experience in the field.

Strengths:

1. The fact that the qualification of the teaching staff is directly related to learning outcomes is

confirmed by the quantitative and qualitative indicators of the midterm and final assessment, as well as the feedback of students, graduates and employers.

2. Qualifications of the teaching staff such as academic staff and guest lecturers teaching in the study program comply with the conditions of the study program implementation and the requirements of regulatory enactments.

Weaknesses: no weaknesses were identified

### **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

Qualifications of the teaching staff such as academic staff and guest lecturers teaching in the study program comply with the conditions of the study program implementation and the requirements of regulatory enactments.

All of the requirements are fulfilled.

(See Annex 24, Annex 25).

### **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

Study programme complies with the professional Higher Education standard regulated by Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 141 "Regulations regarding the state standard in the first-level professional higher education". Total amount of CP in Study programme 100 CP length of implementation 2 years 6 months, CP are divided as follows: 24 CP allocated to general study courses (including business Module 6 CP), 45 CP allocated to specific field study courses (including study courses Environmental Education and Hygiene (1 CP) and Civil Protection (1 CP)).

Internship 20 CP and 8 CP for qualification work. Also includes 4 CP for optional/elective study courses. Based on the information provided by LU RFMK, experts find that other requirements specified in the regulations are also met.

ANNEX 24. Compliance of the study program with the National Education Standard Pharmacist assistant.docx (1).pdf

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Study programme complies with a valid profession standard which can be found here:

<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/ps0369.pdf>

Standard for qualification pharmacist assistant was approved on 10th of November 2010. Each competence in standard has been coupled with appropriate study courses. See: ANNEX 25.

Compliance of the study program with the Profession Standard\_Pharmacist assistant.pdf  
Experts found that standard was approved a long time ago therefore, LU RFMC should monitor the development of a new version of the standard, and if a new professional standard is approved, the programme should be reviewed for compliance with that standard.

- 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

Attached study course descriptions (ANNEX 29. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY COURSE\_Pharmacist assistant.pdf) comply with regulations set forth in Law of 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 (ANNEX 22. Diploma, diploma supplement sample\_Pharmacist assistant.pdf) complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to MK No. 202 “ Procedures for Issuing State-Recognised Documents Attesting 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

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

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

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

ANNEX 11. Knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff.pdf verify that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet of Ministers No.733 of 07/07/2009 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language, the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language and the State Fee for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language".

- 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

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

Sample of attached study agreement complies with Cabinet Regulation No.70 "Mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement" (ANNEX 7. Sample of the Study Agreement.pdf).

- 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

In accordance with the agreement signed by LU R1MC and the Red Cross Medical College of Riga Stradins University on 21/04/2021, students of the study program Pharmacy (41725) with the qualification of pharmacist assistant will be provided with the opportunity to continue their studies in the first level professional higher education program Pharmacy (41725) awarding the qualification of the pharmacist assistant at the Red Cross Medical College of Riga Stradins University. (Annex 5. Opportunity to continue studies.pdf)

- 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

Annex 6. "Student guarantee on loss compensation.pdf" confirms that the institution guarantees 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

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:** Fully compliant

Following the opinion of the certification body - the Latvian Pharmacists' Association (LPA) (22.02.2022. Letter Nr. 2-5/137) experts conclude that programme complies with national regulations. The LPA has indicated that since the last update of the Professional standard in 2010, changes have taken place in the regulatory enactments, the qualification structure of the chemical industry and related industries - chemistry, pharmacy, biotechnology, environmental regulatory enactments (introduced E-prescription E - within the framework of health, introduction of a system for verification of medicinal products or examination of the safety of medicinal products, prescription of medicinal products by an international non-proprietary name). The General Regulation on the protection of personal data has entered into force.

**Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

In general, it must be concluded that the study programme complies with the external regulatory framework.

In order to ensure that the programme continues to meet the requirements of the labor market and the needs of the sector, LU RFMC should monitor the development of a new version of the standard, and if a new professional standard is approved, the programme should be reviewed for compliance with that standard.

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

Students were happy with their studies, teachers that worked hard to offer a good learning experience and good quality resources and facilities. All of these provide a great foundation for learning professional practice. Students were satisfied with the qualification and experience of the teachers; they confirmed the teachers are collaborative and wishing to share their experience with them. Students gave some examples how they provided their feedback, and the teachers listened to their feedback. The graduates were described by the social partners as innovative and competent in their roles. The experts panel concludes that whilst the student experience and outcomes are good, more effective management and internal quality assurance would enhance their experience.

**Strengths:**

1. High demand of pharmacist assistants in the labor market;
2. Compliance of the objectives, aims and other indicators with the outlined criteria;
3. Compliance of the study field with the study program.
4. Students' satisfaction with the content of the program, provision of internships and attitude of lecturers.
5. The study provision, informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision fully comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study program, create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process.

**Weaknesses:**

1. There is no separate funding in the College for the applied research. Some teachers confirmed the College supports them in the process of scientific research competence development. However it is not clear if the system for funding scientific research is effective (see the Paragraph 1.3.1. in the

Joint Report).

2. Incomplete Moodle system and its use in teaching/ learning process.

### Evaluation of the study programme "Pharmacy"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### 2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Pharmacy"

#### Short-term recommendations

1. Evaluate the course "Basics of Entrepreneurship" in the general education course, with the aim to include the topic "Business Correspondence. Business correspondence in the e-environment", taking into account the need for different types of communication in the practical work of pharmacist assistants.

#### Long-term recommendations

1. In case, if new professional standard for qualification "midwife" will be approved, LU RFMC have to review the compliance of the study programme with the professional standard and, if necessary, specify programme accordingly.

## 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	Overall, there are various parts of quality system assurance which the College follows and implements but graduates are not seen to be involved in the quality assurance process conducting surveys, employer survey examples have been seen but none of the employers when asked mentioned it. There is no clear information on the regularity of the student surveys as indicated further in the analysis of the criteria.



Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)	Fully compliant		<p>By 2020 in accordance with the priority research direction "Prevention", overall students and academic staff had carried out at least 10 researches on the topic of prevention in the study programs "Physician Assistant", "Midwife", "Pharmacist Assistant", "Nursing" and "Dentistry" within the framework of each study program (see the analysis results of the criteria 1.4.1. in the Joint Report, Assessment of the study field Health Care, section 1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation).</p> <p>The analysis results of the criteria 1.4.4. (see the Joint Report, Assessment of the study field Health Care, section 1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation) confirmed the number of the staff members participating in the conferences (including international conferences) was increasing from 15 (2013) to 56 (2016) and remaining stable 51-55 in the period from 2017 to 2019. Number of the publications of academic staff (including books of abstracts, cited publications, industry journals) increased from 16 in 2013 to 39 in 2018 and 38 in 2019. Number of the teaching staff members participating in the EU co-funded projects (research in the areas of the study direction, attracting study resources, etc.) increased from 3 (2013) to 11 (2020).</p> <p>The above mentioned analysis results, as well as the Strengths identified by the expert panel and stated in Joint Report (Assessment of the Study Field Health Care, Section 1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation) are proving the compliance of the scientific research with the level of development of scientific research in the field of Health Care.</p> <p>However, following the information mentioned by academic staff during the site visit and after the analysis of 1.4.1. – 1.4.6. in the Joint Report Part I some significant weaknesses of scientific research in the field of Health Care were identified by the experts, such as insufficient application of scientific research results in the study programmes (teachers representing separate study programmes could not provide any examples of performing other scientific activities, except supervising the bachelor papers of the students and participating in the annual scientific events at the College. No examples about the scientific research, implemented by the teachers according to their personal scientific interests, related with their teaching subjects, were given), lack of evidence of the purposeful international collaboration (some teachers of the study programme "Pharmacy" in the meeting with the expert panel provided several examples about the international cooperation in the frame of inviting international partners to participate in the annual international conference organized by the College and sharing experience with international partners during Erasmus+ teachers' exchange visits, however the internalization strategy which defines the priority countries for international collaboration, was missing, it was concluded in the meetings with the teachers and directors of the study programmes), lack of additional motivating mechanisms for the teachers get involved in the scientific research (there is no separate system for funding scientific research, the College uses some of its savings to allocate some resources, it was stated on 03.23 during the meeting with the Administration representatives of the College). The above mentioned weaknesses reflected the lack of the system for scientific research integration to the studies, insufficient teacher's motivation for the scientific research and absence of internationalisation strategy. The deficiencies could impose a significant risk for the future period in the field of the compliance of the scientific research with the level of development of scientific research in the Health Care study field.</p> <p>Taking into account that the requirement must assess whether scientific research comply with the level of development of scientific research and the status of the college, the implemented first level professional higher education study programmes and achieved results, all together experts assessed this requirement as fully compliant</p> <p>Yet, the College must find solutions to the shortcomings identified so as not to jeopardize the research results achieved and their future development.</p>
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.	Fully compliant		<p>All requirements are fulfilled. Cooperation with all Latvian colleges takes place within the framework of actions of the Association of Latvian Colleges when discussing and deciding on issues important for the development of college education. LU RFMC actively cooperates with employer professional associations, such as Latvian Nurses Association, Emergency Medicine Association of the Republic of Latvia, Latvian Society of Outpatient Physician Assistants, Latvian Association of Rural Family Doctors, Latvian Midwives Association, Pharmacists' Society of Latvia, etc. (see annex 15).</p>

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.		Partially compliant	HEI has partially fulfilled some recommendation of Experts provided in previous accreditation of the study field "Health Care" and this is indicated in the SAR . As mentioned above, the responses indicated possibilities for improvement but did not evidence actual improvement. Although the responses are welcomed, it is possible to frame them in a way by which progress can be measured

### 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	Medicine (41721)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
2	Medicine (41721)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
3	Pharmacy (41725)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

### The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

Not found