

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Art Academy of Latvia

Study field: Arts

Experts:

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

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During the experts visit at the Art Academy of Latvia (hereinafter AAL) and visit at the AAL Latgale branch in Rezekne, the team of experts went through a series of meeting sessions with the management, the academic faculty, the students, the alumni and the stakeholders of the academy. The study field is undoubtedly of a good standard that is also the backbone of the Academy which needs to be sustained and supported. There is a clear hierarchy in the whole Academy with clear roles in various posts, nevertheless the team of experts felt that the management of the Academy needs a better re-organization with not only personal posts (alleviating hard work and over responsibility to one person) within the hierarchy but with teams/committees that will take up responsibilities and that can create more formalized procedures in the running of the Academy: These Committees should concern, Quality Assurance, Career Advising, Liaison with the Industry etc. Formalized committees need to involve persons from higher academic managers to teaching faculty, to students, alumni, and stakeholders.

There is a need for a better and a more efficient Internal Quality Assurance System that also needs to run horizontally as well as vertically from top management through to students with formalized procedures with meetings and minutes taken as well as implementation for action plans.

The resources and provisions for the study field both human and physical are to be commended and the team of experts would also encourage the Academy to continue on this note by updating and upkeep. The importance of the Rezekne branch was noted, and the team of experts would encourage better support as well as further financial input to develop and grow stronger both in academic domains as well as with its physical resources. A stronger lobby persistence in the government may be needed to push actions towards such support.

Scientific Research and Artistic Creation is in place and again to be commended. There are various cooperation both nationally as well as internationally through internships and mobilities and the shared experience of this activity contributes to the Academy. The cooperation among faculty and students is also to be commended. Development in cooperation and Internationalisation needs to be growing on a continuous basis.

Throughout the 3 days the team of experts came across a number of academic faculty, students, alumni and stakeholders and witnessed a very positive support towards the Academy and its study programmes by everybody and at all levels, BA, MA and Doctorate. The team of experts have also come across specific study programmes and sub-programmes that are to be commended, these programmes being "POST" which is a sub-programme of the Academic Master's degree programme "Arts" and Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations". These two study programmes could form a good example as well the basis for a good comparison throughout the Academy.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1.

The information about the aims of the study field at the AAL is quite clear. The academy's strategic specialization is well-defined, emphasizing higher education in art, design, theory and history of art and culture. It also emphasizes research and artistic activity with a focus on technological and non-technological innovations and artistic practice. (Annex Study field development plan). These aims

are specific and seem attainable given the academy's long history and commitment to these areas. The study field and programmes at the AAL appear to be in alignment with the main directions of the strategic development of the institution. The academy's focus on art, design, creative industries, and technology seems to align with the needs and development trends of society and the national economy. Additionally, their involvement in various projects and collaborations reflects an effort to contribute to cultural and artistic development in different regions. AAL provides various study programmes (5), including bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs, each with its own sub-specializations. While the SAR for each study program highlights the content and objectives of these programs, it doesn't explicitly discuss how they are interconnected, but more detailed study program descriptions display connection from one study level to the next one. After the site visit experts can conclude that study programs are structurally interconnected.

The Academy's strategy does not cover any indicators of how the Academy meets or contributes to the national/local economy for example commercialisation of certain projects, which could also financially benefit the academy and bring students closer to the labor market. Experts team encourages the academy to put a bigger emphasis on discussing and teaching students how to commercialize and sell their artistic work. This can be attained also through life-long education courses or alumni association. In SAR section 2.1.1. p.18 an emphasis on progression from bachelor's to master's to doctoral studies, which suggests a logical progression and ensures continuity of the study process and artistic creation. The ALL claims to have a student-centric approach in planning its study process. AAL has assessed student needs, considering socio-economic impact, and focus on graduate employability. AAL provides infrastructure, digital tools, training opportunities, and international cooperation to support student excellence. (SAR section 2.1.1. p.17) Students also have access to the AAL infrastructure also outside of study hours, confirmed during the visit of material-technical base. This approach aligns with the criteria of ensuring a focus on students and their success. AAL aims to promote changes in the structure of production and exports, stimulate growth sectors with high added value, and have a significant impact on economic transformation. For example, together with employers students have the opportunity to display, commercialize, and advertise their artistic work in galleries, exhibitions, museums etc. AAL this year obtained FLPP (Fundamental and Applied research grant) from Latvian Science Council in collaboration with University of Latvia. This grant is evaluated by foreign experts and also serves as indication that AAL research work can contribute to the economy. AAL indicates that it has maintained a consolidated study program model since 2001 and has established international joint study programs during this time. (SAR section 2.1.1. p.18) This suggests stability and a clear direction in their program offerings closely related to the field of Arts and are evaluated on an international level.

1.1.2.

Based on the SAR section 2.1.2. p.19-22, experts evaluated the criteria related to the higher education institution's identification and analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) in its study field and their integration into development planning documents. The strengths of the Art Academy of Latvia's study field include a strong emphasis on maintaining classical art techniques while integrating modern skills and technologies like AR (augmented reality), VR (virtual reality), and AI (Artificial intelligence). Other strengths include experience in building consortia, effective teaching, visible creative activity, and a synergy between education, research, and creative activity. The academy also demonstrates a track record in attracting funding for development projects, offers a diverse study and research environment, and has a good reputation. The identified weaknesses include heavy dependence on state funding, insufficient infrastructure, particularly in digital resources, and an inadequate number of academic staff with doctoral degrees. Financial motivation for staff appears to be lacking, and there is limited international visibility due to the country's size. Other weaknesses include constraints in adapting curriculum, limited domestic markets for art and design, and a reliance on state support and public research funding. The AAL

identifies various opportunities, such as leveraging classical art techniques for digital skills and innovation, developing niche skills in line with labor market developments, and expanding research in art, design, and architecture. There are opportunities to diversify funding sources, enhance knowledge and education, and collaborate with businesses. The academy also sees potential in attracting highly qualified specialists, expanding cooperation with business, and increasing staff motivation through performance-based rewards. The threats include over-dependence on state support, insufficient international visibility, low salaries, limited competencies and skills, and a lack of income diversification. The academy faces challenges in an unstable higher education regulatory environment, limited influence in local funding mechanisms, and competition in the international education and research market. Additionally, the development of artificial intelligence technologies may pose a threat to creative professionals, and there is a limited local art and design market. Overall, the AAL appears to have conducted a comprehensive SWOT analysis of its study field. Opportunities identified mainly have been included in the study field development plan for 2020-2030 period. The weakness for example of insufficient number of staff members with PhD has not been included in the strategy or how to deal with ever growing influence of AI modeling on the artistic creation process. AAL has identified and analyzed internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats. These insights can inform and influence the institution's development planning documents and strategies to address weaknesses, capitalize on opportunities, and mitigate threats.

1.1.3.

The management structure of the Art Academy of Latvia (AAL) appears to be oriented toward the development of the study field. The AAL emphasizes involving students, academic staff, and general staff in implementing the Academy's strategic goals and modernizing study programs as well as involving students into decision making bodies. Unfortunately during the site interviews experts found out that the student governing body does not seem strong enough to establish connections and ensure succession of student representatives within all the commissions and governing bodies where student representatives would be needed. Student union as a governing body that can influence decision making in the Academy (also in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions) is not included in the general structural scheme of the Academy. There is a hierarchy in the whole Academy with clear roles in various posts, nevertheless experts suggest that the management of the Academy needs a better re-organization with not only personal posts (alleviating hard work and over responsibility to one person) within the hierarchy but with teams/committees that will take up responsibilities and that can create more formalized procedures in the running of the Academy. For example, the study field director according to the management scheme is overloaded by managing 5 faculties and 19 departments, where each head is also involved in the implementation of study programs. Additionally middle management - study programme directors, sub-programme directors during the interviews seemed disconnected from knowing and explaining their tasks towards management of study sub-programs and QA system. Which highlights the need for alleviation of responsibility from one person. On the other hand, the study field director was very enthusiastic and informed about all the processes in the Academy and how to ensure study process quality. To resolve the issue of disconnection from Academy processes more open and frequent communication is required from the study field director towards all heads of programs and sub-programmes. Such an approach would ensure continuous development and ensure that decision making within the study programmes is more efficient and transparent. Annual self-assessment reports of staff, support needed for all staff members involved in implementation of study programmes, would be better taken care of. This also is an indication that the study field director has a huge workload and barely can manage continuous information flow from all the study programme directors. AAL structure establishes various roles, such as the Vice-Rector of Study Work and Vice-Rector for Scientific Work, to oversee the implementation of accredited study programmes, including Bachelor's, Master's, and doctoral programs. Additionally, there is a focus on the

development of innovative study content, combining research, artistic activities, and academic education. SAR section 1.2. p. 8-10 outlines the responsibilities of key positions within the management structure, including decision-making related to academic activities, resource allocation, approval of course descriptions, coordination of diploma theses, and management of entrance examinations. However, the information does not explicitly mention the efficiency of the decision-making processes. For example how fast the issues or suggestion can be resolved and discussed (SAR section 2.1.3. p.22-23). The administrative and organizational work for various study programs at AAL is managed by dedicated departments, such as the Bachelor's Study Department and Master's Study Department, each headed by a programme leader or director. These departments are responsible for implementing and controlling the study process, ensuring compliance with regulations, and supporting program development. In general administrative and technical support staff ensures the needs of staff members and students. Experts group concludes that Latgale branch is working efficiently and ensures a BA level study environment. Staff members are going to Riga and vice versa. At the same time Latgale branch feels administratively separated from Riga. They struggle with infrastructure and unfortunately in terms of available premises and art space BA students in Latgale do not have the same opportunities as the BA students in Riga. AAL should think more about how they can support Branch and develop it further as it serves as a culture center in Latgale.

1.1.4.

The Art Academy of Latvia (AAL) has established a systematic admission process for students at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. The process involves several stages, including the reception of applications, organizing entrance examinations, publishing competition results, and registering students. The enrollment criteria for each study level, documents needed etc. are publicly available at LAA webpage <https://www.lma.lv/akademija/dokumenti>. Academy also has received approval from the Higher Education Council to conduct their additional entrance exams. (Annex Nr_71_LMA_en) To ensure a unified approach for all students in terms of evaluation AAL have created formulas for each study program which are available at SAR section 2.1.4. LAA has established regulations for the recognition of competencies acquired outside formal education or through professional experience and for the recognition of study results achieved in previous education. These regulations adhere to national legal requirements and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation. Applicants who wish to have their knowledge, skills, and competencies recognized can submit applications specifying the learning outcomes they seek to equate with AAL study programs, modules, or courses (SAR section 2.1.4. p. 27). These regulations are not publicly available, AAL should ensure that such document and procedure is available on their webpage for potential student candidates. AAL uses a comprehensive approach to assess students' achievements and learning outcomes during the admission process. For bachelor's and master's programs, applicants are evaluated based on a combination of centralized examination scores, specific aptitude and competence exams, portfolios or creative work collections, master's thesis applications, and interviews. Each component is assessed on a defined scale and contributes to an overall competition score used to rank applicants. The criteria for assessment are transparent and specified in detail. The admission process at AAL appears to be well-structured, effective, and logically designed. It takes into account both academic criteria and creative aptitude, aligning with the nature of art and design education. The regulations governing the admission process provide clear guidance to applicants, ensuring fairness and transparency. While the provided information describes the admission process in detail, it does not explicitly mention communication with stakeholders. Effective communication with stakeholders, including applicants, is crucial to ensure that they are well-informed about the admission system, requirements, and procedures. It would be beneficial for AAL to have a clear communication strategy to inform prospective students and other relevant parties about the admission process. Also input obtained from stakeholders could highlight the needs of the market and slightly adjust the enrollment process. AAL has established a systematic

and well-structured admission system that aligns with legal requirements and provides clear criteria for assessing applicants' achievements and learning outcomes. To further enhance the system, the institution may consider improving communication with stakeholders to ensure that applicants are well-informed about the admission process and requirements.

1.1.5.

AAL follows a clear set of regulations for assessing students' results, as outlined in the "Regulations on Study Bylaws at the Art Academy of Latvia." This document appears to provide guidelines and procedures for assessment of students in the study process. AAL uses a 10-point grading system for assessing students' knowledge, skills, and competencies. This system is commonly used in higher education and provides a clear framework for evaluating student performance. Regulations are publicly available -

<https://www.lma.lv/uploads/pages/en/831/files/nolikums-stud-kartiba-lma-m-l-ok-redigets-2023-ap-e-n.pdf>. SAR section 2.1.5. p. 29. mentions that evaluation methods are chosen by teaching staff based on the content of the course, the specifics of the study programme, and student needs. While this indicates a consideration of relevance, the specific assessment methods, and their alignment with program goals and student needs, are not described in detail. If AAL likes to lead by example and not only ensure but also improve evaluation procedures of students, experts would urge for the Academy to include a double grading process in the study process. Artistic work evaluation can also be controversial based on professional experiences and from this point of view students are unprotected. Potential double grading can ensure that evaluation is fair and not based on the individual opinion of one expert. The regulations highlight various rights and responsibilities of students related to their studies. Students have the right to interrupt and resume studies, change their field of study, and access information about the study program's content, examination forms, and assessment criteria. This demonstrates a commitment to ensuring student flexibility and transparency in the academic process. The study course descriptions provide more detailed information about the intended outcomes and benchmarks that students must meet to achieve a satisfactory grade. This transparency in course descriptions helps students understand what is expected of them.

1.1.6.

The Art Academy of Latvia has established principles of academic integrity through various documents, including the AAL Constitution, the AAL Code of Ethics, the AAL Arbitration Regulations, the AAL Study Procedures, and the Bylaws on Academic Positions. These documents collectively provide a framework for promoting and upholding academic integrity within the institution. While the SAR outlines the principles of academic freedom and academic integrity, it does not explicitly describe specific mechanisms or anti-plagiarism tools used to ensure their observance. This also is understandable since it is harder to track plagiarism with artistic creation. During the site interviews experts could not find any indication that AAL is using anti-plagiarism tools. During the site interviews AAL representatives also could not name any anti plagiarism tools that they are using, similar to QA system representatives. This let the experts team conclude that the only way plagiarism is currently being detected is based on the opinion of the students supervisor. Moreover, the Academy recognizes the threats imposed by AI tools, but during the interviews representatives only could mention that in future they will start work on regulations on how to use/include and what to prohibit in the study process with AI. However, the institution's emphasis on academic freedom, ethical principles, and the responsibility of academic staff and students implies a commitment to upholding academic integrity. Regulations seem to also highlight the responsibility of academic staff and students to promote openness and ethical conduct. These principles contribute to the development of an internal culture that values academic integrity. SAR does not explicitly mention mechanisms for informing stakeholders (students, faculty, etc.) about academic integrity principles or anti-plagiarism tools. However, by establishing these principles within the institution's governing documents, stakeholders are expected to be aware of their responsibilities regarding academic

integrity. The Art Academy of Latvia has taken steps to establish academic integrity principles through its governing documents, emphasizing academic freedom, research ethics, and ethical conduct. Nevertheless there is still a lot of room for improvement of communication about academic integrity and more regulation is needed towards tools that are available to students.

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

The Art Academy of Latvia (AAL) has a clear strategic specialization in higher education related to art, design, theory, and history of art and culture. It focuses on research and artistic activities with an emphasis on technological and non-technological innovations. The academy offers a range of study programs at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. AAL is committed to student-centric education and graduate employability, providing infrastructure and international cooperation to support student excellence. The academy also aims to contribute to economic transformation by promoting changes in production, stimulating growth sectors, and supporting student involvement in commercializing artistic work. However, there are weaknesses, such as heavy dependence on state funding, limited infrastructure, and a lack of academic staff with doctoral degrees. The academy also faces challenges in an unstable regulatory environment and international competition. AAL has a well-structured admission process, evaluating applicants based on various criteria, including academic and creative aptitude. However, communication with stakeholders could be improved. The institution emphasizes academic integrity and ethical conduct but lacks specific anti-plagiarism mechanisms. There is a need for clearer regulations and communication regarding AI tools in the study process.

Strengths:

- 1) Well established and functioning enrollment process to select best students.
- 2) Academy has very good SWOT analysis indicating awareness about their weaknesses and providing a road map to mitigate or resolve them.
- 3) Excellent recognition of art content in the State and internationally.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Structure and supervision of study programmes and departments is highly dependent on one person.
- 2) Student council as part of the decision making body is not included in the structure of the Academy.
- 3) The Academy is lacking anti-plagiarism tools to evaluate student works.
- 4) The Academy has not started work on creating guidelines/regulations on how students can use AI tools for the study process.
- 5) The Latgale branch works perfectly, but is administratively quite separated from the overall structure of the academy.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1.

According to the SAR (p. 31) the Art Academy of Latvia (AAL) has developed an internal management quality system, which ensures that quality management and procedures are established. The information on Quality Assurance was made available through the SAR and the Appendices as well it is published on the Academy's digital platforms.

Meetings, for example, with the Academy management or with members of the group responsible for the preparation of a Self-Assessment report, convinced of their implementation in practice.

However, during the team of experts visit in the Academy between the days 19-21 September 2023, it became evident that the implementation of the quality assurance policy is still in the development stage and not systematic in all matters and not applied vertically or horizontally among the Academy's full population which consist of the higher management, the faculty, the administration, the students, alumni, and stakeholders. The procedures came across as not very formalized and seemed that the policy for Quality Assurance although in place has not been embedded by everybody. AAL has established a quality assurance system within the Quality Policy document that AAL Senate adopted in early 2023. The experts note that AAL management and the study programmes management are familiar with the procedures of a quality assurance system and actively participate in the preparation of self-assessment reports as is stated in the Quality Policy document (Article 2). In doing so, they pay great attention to monitoring the learning outcomes of study programmes within the field of study. This is partially ensured by semester evaluations of final exhibitions of students' academic achievements in which all stakeholders participate. They also provide quality monitoring twice a year by carrying out surveys among students on content of study courses and implementation of the study process. The students' high satisfaction with the implementation of the study process is evident also from the fact that AAL has an extremely low dropout rate. As many as 90% of enrolled students graduate successfully. Furthermore, once per academic year annual self-assessment of study programmes takes place in which, in addition to the students, they also get feedback from the heads of individual study programmes who collect data from the teaching staff in a more informal way. During the interviews, it was emphasized that the informal conversations with teaching staff is used as the basis of quality monitoring. Such a way of obtaining feedback for quality assurance can therefore create a situation that does not include all stakeholders of the study process. For this reason, it is recommended to regularly conduct annual formal interviews with employees and surveys with the aim of building a stable and long-term internal quality system. It is clear from all the conducted interviews and accessible documents, that the internal quality system in its current implementation still allows for improvements in the quality circle in all areas (vertically and horizontally) of the higher education institution's operation. Students and academic personnel are insufficiently familiar with the implementation of the self-assessment report and also insufficiently participate in its preparation. It is clear from the interviews that at the AAL, a quality assurance system by the students has been set up with the help of surveys, but in addition, it would be necessary to describe more precisely the methods of monitoring the quality of pedagogical, research and scientific work from the point of higher education works, as well as monitoring by general (non-teaching) staff and quality monitoring with the external stakeholders, all listed in the Quality Management Guide. The experts suggest that the Quality Management Guide also includes survey questionnaires in the annexes. The group of experts suggest that it would be reasonable to include a quality monitoring committee in the structure of the LAA, which would have more members and could, in this way, manage the quality monitoring process in a more in-depth and regular manner. Experts believe that it would be expedient to conduct annual training for all employees and students on specific approaches, methodologies and importance of quality monitoring at a higher education institution.

1.2.2.

According to the SAR (pp. 34-36), all the study programmes in the Academy are regularly evaluated and developed. Because of the structure of the AAL which is quite small in population and its policy on an entry door policy the feedback mechanisms are quite efficient.

The development and review processes of study programmes are regulated by the Regulations on the Procedure for Implementation of Study programs at the Art Academy of Latvia (approved at the Art Academy of Latvia Senate meeting on 29 January 2019; changes to the Regulations approved at the Art Academy of Latvia Senate meeting on 10 March 2023). During the site visit, the team of experts witnessed the involvement of students and graduates, academic staff, and employers in the development and review of the study programmes. Considering the small size of the academy and

its community (number of students and staff), the evaluation and development of the study programmes are often carried out in informal mutual discussions, thus providing a more effective feedback mechanism than the formalized procedure that is in place. In general, peer-to-peer discussions were found to be the most effective way to review and develop the curriculum, as they provide immediate feedback for analyzing problems and making changes. Nevertheless this activity can easily be elevated into a formalized procedure where official meetings among faculty, students, graduates and stakeholders are set and implemented on a regular basis throughout the academic year.

The AAL Senate has confirmed the Course Development and Updating Procedure document in March 2023. In the latter, the procedures for the development and the review of study courses according to the goals, objectives and expected results of the study programmes are specified and determined. From the obtained documents, it is clear that they only get feedback from students. They conduct semester surveys, but the latter are voluntary. Therefore, the response rate is very low. In the 2022/2023 first semester survey overall response rate in five (5) programmes was only 29%, with the highest in the Professional Doctoral Programme of 62% and lowest in the Bachelor programme where only 28% of students participated. The average rating of the courses is 3.5 out of a maximum of 4. In the brief analysis of the survey, they note that the answers obtained in the survey should be available to the lecturers. During the interviews, the students emphasized that they have many informal conversations with lecturers in individual courses and that their comments are heard. From the statements of the students, it is evident that they have a very good relationship with the teachers and everyone (both in Riga and in Latgale) emphasized the enthusiasm and dedication of the lecturers, which they convey in the study process. They also emphasize that the dedication and support that they get during their studies from the lecturers is exceptional and generally at a very high professional level. As the level of system regulation of obtaining feedback in the framework of quality assurance of study programmes at AAL, they are not familiar with it (if it exists) and have never participated. Within the AAL departments, the teaching staff hold meetings at least once a month, where they discuss the implementation of the study process as well as other relevant activities related to the implementation and development of the study programmes. It was pointed out that they have a functioning mechanism at the level of the departments, within which employees can give initiative to the Head of the department for the development of new courses or the revision of the existing ones. Both can be implemented rather quickly. The Alumni Association is listed on the AAL website, but is not yet operational. The AAL graduate was also present at the interviews, who was recently asked by AAL management to take over the management of the latter in the future. Some graduates are/were employed at AAL as lecturers, some of them are very successful in their professions and are also internationally recognized. It would be of great opportunity to develop an operational Alumni Association, which, in addition to the rest, would continuously assist the AAL in obtaining feedback on the study process with the aim of introducing improvements in quality assurance in higher education and the relevant study programme, as they currently do not have such a functioning system of participation of graduates in place. Team of experts had access to one document with the results of a survey among graduates, which was carried out this year, but the data obtained are unclear and do not allow for qualitative analysis of feedback with the aim of improving and ensuring the quality of study programmes. It should be emphasized that for the development and review of the study field Arts, they have a very detailed plan for its development, which includes ambitious plans for the period of 2023-2030. In order to achieve and sustain these goals, it would be expedient to define a systematic collection of feedback data (from students, employers and graduates), its analysis and possible implementation. Due to the extensiveness of such work, the group of experts recommends that the demanding work of the Head of the Study Programme Arts be expanded with the participation of other academic members.

1.2.3.

There is a formal Quality Assurance procedure that is implemented and followed as part of the

annual evaluation process. According to the SAR (p. 36) students' complaints and proposals may be submitted to the study department of each sub-programme: in person or electronically, as well as to the Rector's Office: in person or at info@lma.lv, where the letter is registered and given for further consideration in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Legal Force and the Law on Submissions. Additionally, during the meetings, it was also found out that students can give feedback readily at any time throughout the semesters to all the faculty from administration staff to the higher management.

The LAA provided evidence on students' feedback and provided records to solutions to complaints, suggestions etc.

According to the opinion of students - during the team of experts on-site visit - suggestions and or changes were made and the general students consensus was that their voice is strong and it is heard especially because of the AAL strong student-centric approach and open-door policy.

Currently, a system of obtaining information through surveys has been developed, but only on a voluntary basis. Therefore, the rate of completed questionnaires is extremely low. The students' opinion obtained at the interviews is that they see no point in answering the questionnaires, because nothing happens because of them. It was pointed out that if filling in the questionnaires were mandatory, the accuracy of the data obtained would be questionable and therefore useless. The suggestion is to think about the revision of the content of the questionnaires, maybe include questions that are more substantive and allow students to open-ended responses with their suggestions for improvement and involvement in the internal quality assurance system process. When preparing questionnaires for surveys, it would be reasonable to involve the Student Council. It could also be involved in promoting the importance of completing questionnaires among students in order to improve the quality of study process in the context of the long-term development of the study programme. For this purpose, it would be good to empower the Student Council, which could be more numerous and more involved in the management of the higher education institution. At the level of the Student Council, a platform can be opened on which students can make complaints and suggestions, and the Student Council then communicates with higher-ups (head of departments, head of study programmes, Senate). Experts also suggest that the Committee on Study Affairs, in addition to the Vice-rector for study work, be more recognizable in the structure of the AAL.

1.2.4.

According to the SAR (p. 38) all data statistics are collected and analysed for AAL management reports. Information on graduates' working lives in the previous six years was collected and included in the long-term development strategy and other development documents, as well as in the AAL management reports. This information was provided by AAL in the Internal self-assessment reports for 2019, 2020, 2021. Information on graduates' career paths was provided to the AAL Senate, the Board of Studies and the Quality management group. Evidence of the above mentioned reports were provided by the AAL after they were requested by the team of experts and were sent to AIKA.

During the team of experts on site visit it became evident that the holistic Quality Assurance Policy - which appears in place on paper - in reality is still in the early stages, and it is not fully implemented or at least it does not yet utilize formal procedures. Because of the small tight community it has been so far easy to collect data and statistics, but this process needs to abide with formal procedures and be documented and archived so that it can develop into a robust QA policy that will act as the main tool towards the development and the sustainability of the study programmes with formal action plans and proposed solutions. Overall, according to the official documents of the Academy (SAR), the ways of obtaining statistics on study programmes is a systematic and formalized procedure, the team experts consider that the whole process still needs reinforcement and empowerment to make the process more appropriate, sufficient and effective. According to the available documents and data obtained during the interviews, only surveys among students are currently carried out systematically. Surveys among employees or employers are not systematically

carried out. During the interviews, it was pointed out that a lot of information is obtained from informal conversation within the framework of regular meetings of the departments. It should be emphasized that informal conversations can therefore create a certain situation that does not include all stakeholders of the study process. For this purpose, it is of great importance to regularly conduct annual formal interviews with all academic staff and surveys in order to ensure the constant acquisition and analysis of statistical data on the relevant study programme. The current involvement of academic staff in the systematic acquisition of feedback on the study programmes and its content allows for improvements by introducing formalized interviews and clearly structured questionnaires, which employees fill out once a year. Only then can the data obtained in this way be qualitatively analytically processed and their results included in the further development of improvements and quality assurance of the educational process. The AAL Quality Management Guide document (chapter 3.7. AAL Information Management and Communication) provides clear structure of survey levels and it only needs to be implemented. It is necessary to implement greater monitoring of the quality of the study field among graduates and employers as well.

Overall, according to the official documents of the Academy (SAR), the way of obtaining statistics on study programmes is a systematic and formalized procedure, the team experts consider that the whole process still needs reinforcement and empowerment to make the process more appropriate, sufficient and effective.

1.2.5.

Information on the study programmes of the study field "Art": Bachelor, Master, Academic Doctorate and Professional Doctorate is published on the website of the AAL: <https://www.lma.lv/>. The information provided on the public site of the AAL corresponds to the information that was made available through the Self-Assessment Report and all the documents listed on the AIKA e-platform as well as to the LAA's digital platforms such as "LAIS". Information provided in the VIIS system also corresponds to the claims made by AAL in the SAR and during the site visit. The same information is available in the academy webpage. The information for all study programmes on the website are published in Latvian and English. The contents of Bachelor's and Master's study programmes are presented with tables of courses, short descriptions of individual courses and a selection of the results of the study programme, but only for 2nd and 3rd year of Bachelor's study and 1st year of Masters' study. The Doctoral study also has data related to the procedure and method of conducting the doctoral study. Experts suggest that it would be expedient to also include a more extensive Presentation Guide for doctoral studies and curricula for doctoral studies. In contrast, the Professional doctorate has more limited information published on the website, which is probably due to the fact that it is a new programme, of which the first final works are expected at the beginning of 2024. It is recommended to pay attention to the fact that the descriptions of the content of individual courses differ from each other vertically (the content must be upgraded between years of study). If the name of the course is the same throughout the years of study programme, it makes sense to supplement it with numerical symbols so that students can recognize the difference to which level the content refers to (some programmes have numerical distinction, but only when they are in the same year, not between years). This is also necessary for effective monitoring of the results of the study process regarding the quality assurance policy. Course content descriptions must be updated between years and levels of study and must not be the same in all years and levels, regardless of whether they refer to the same subject in terms of the content and name. For better transparency and readability, Experts suggest that the Bachelor's and Masters' study programme tabs be split, as they are currently on the same undergraduate programme overview website. The website is designed to be user-friendly, but there are notable discrepancies and ambiguities in the information published on the website. In the presentations of the study programmes, some lecturers are listed, but their most representative bibliographies, the subjects they teach ect. are not listed. The experts suggest that the information on the website be unified in content and corrected, and in some cases supplemented. They have an e-platform within the AAL

website. The latter can be accessed by students and teachers with the granted permission for the purpose of quick and efficient information. Study programmes should be presented uniformly with basic information, enrollment requirements, requirements for advancement to higher years, requirements for completing studies, enrollment notices and published enrollment forms. It might be advisable to adopt the presentation of all study programmes on the website to the presentation of Service Design Strategies and Innovations (hereinafter referred as SDSI) programme studies, which currently has the most substantive arrangement of this information.

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

The AAL has developed Quality management guidelines and a Quality management policy, which are also taken into account in the implementation of the study field and the study programmes. To assure the quality of studies, the opinions of various stakeholders—students, graduates, academic staff, and employers - are taken into account.

Given the small size of the Academy and the study field (e.g., in terms of programmes, students, and staff), less formal approaches such as peer discussions and debriefings are more often used to ensure the quality of studies. For the most part, such methods are quite effective in providing fast feedback mechanisms. However there is a need for a better and a more efficient Internal Quality Assurance System that also needs to run horizontally as well as vertically from top management through to students with formalized procedures with meetings and minutes taken as well as implementation for action plans. The process for collecting data and generally the whole collection mechanism needs to be intensified and formalized further and be evident on digital platforms of the AAL.

Overall, the AAL has developed and maintains a quality assurance system, which contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programs. This system needs a reinforced and continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programs.

The procedures for the development and review of the relevant study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms have been defined. The AAL has laid out a detailed plan for the development of its QA system, which includes ambitious plans for the period of 2023-2030. Due to the extensiveness of such work, the group of experts recommends that the demanding work of the Head of the Study Programme Arts be expanded with the participation of other academic members. The mechanism developed for submission of student complaints and suggestions is in place, and students are informed about such opportunities and receive feedback. This needs to include questions that are more substantive and allow students to open-ended responses with their suggestions for improvement and involvement in the internal quality assurance system process. The involvement of the Student Council in the whole process must be further encouraged. The statistical data collection mechanism established by AAL, ensures regular collection and analysis of information on the study programs corresponding to the study field. The official documents of the Academy (SAR), and the way of obtaining statistics on study programmes is effective and focuses on the improvement of the study field, nevertheless the whole process still needs reinforcement and empowerment to make the process more appropriate, sufficient, and effective. The information published on the website of AAL about the study programmes corresponding to the study field corresponds to the information available in the official registers (VIIS and E-platform), and generally all procedures that concern the academic process and activity are available both in Latvian as well as in English.

Strengths:

1) The mechanism for obtaining feedback by employers who are involved in the assessment of student performance in open exhibitions and by participating in the assessment of the final work

presentation.

- 2) The student-centric approach by the AAL and the open door policy throughout the academy where students' voice is constantly heard and taken in for consideration.
- 3) Prepared document Quality Management Guide in which the system of ensuring quality maintenance and development is clearly written and structured.
- 4) Created AAL Development Strategy 2023-2030 (part of it is also Study field development plan) for the period 2023 -2030 that is very ambitious and accurate in terms of content.
- 5) LAA has a clear and detailed internal structure of the institution, which is available on their website.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Lack of active involvement of all the population of the AAL (management, faculty, guest lecturers, administration, students, alumni, stakeholders and representative of the Student Council) in the quality assurance processes of studies.
- 2) The study quality assurance process is not completely systematic or fully formalized; and relies mostly on informal feedback processes.
- 3) In the process of preparing self-evaluation reports various stakeholders - academy teachers, general staff, students and alumni are not involved.
- 4) Commissions for different areas do not have different composition with the involvement of teaching staff from different departments (some of them when they will be established) and students.
- 5) Membership in commissions are exclusively tied to individuals in the management of the LAA.
- 6) A survey is not conducted annually among teaching staff and non-teaching staff.
- 7) Not all self-assessment reports are published on the website.
- 8) On the website presentations of teaching staff at individual levels of study programmes and a selection of their bibliography or/and artistic achievements, as well as the subjects in which they participate is not accessible.

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

A study quality assurance system has been established and is being implemented at the Academy, but it does not take place in a systematic way, and some of its elements are not fully implemented or are not formally processed, as this became evident in the various meetings that took place during the site visit 19-21 September 2023.

- 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

In paper and notably in the SAR (p.31-39) the quality assurance policy and system is well laid out. However after the site visit it became evident that this policy needs to be strengthened and to run horizontally as well as vertically from top management through to students with formalized procedures with meetings and minutes taken as well as implementation for action plans.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is a responsible tool for mechanism of development and internal approval of the study programmes: All the procedures and changes are being implemented and must continue in the future in a more formalized manner so that this becomes part of quality culture.

- 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

Starting each study subject students are introduced with criteria for successful passing of each study subject methods of evaluating students and more detailed information is available in study course descriptions. The joint exhibitions of students and faculty as well as assessments in the presence of stakeholders add to the quality of the whole evaluation process.

- 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 are procedures very common to any Higher education institution, electing personal to academic positions. The evaluation of academic staff qualifications takes place firstly cyclically - before the election to the academic post and at the end of the election period; and secondly annually through scholarly activity and/or artistic production as documented in the SAR (p.31-39)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The analysis of SAR documents and what was discussed during the on site visits showed that most data and information is collected and a systematic analysis is carried out (e.g., satisfaction of the students with the study programmes etc).

- 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: Fully compliant

The analysis of SAR documents and the findings after the site visit showed that the study programmes and its study courses are regularly improved taking into account the opinions of students, the evaluation of graduates, or the suggestions of employers. This is a continuing development for the improvement of the study field and the programmes and its human and physical resources.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1. For the implementation of the AAL study field and the corresponding study programmes, the base state funding is used, accordingly, it is proportionally distributed among the AAL study programmes. The Art Academy of Latvia is financed from the state budget in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement on the Training of Specialists dated January 31, 2019 (SAR, page 40). There are

separate programmes that have paid students, from which it is possible to ensure the development of the programmes. The attraction of EU financial resources for the provision of study, scientific and creative content in the AAL is commendable. The funding system for scientific, applied research and artistic creativity depends on the base funding, which the Academy proportionally uses to ensure these activities. The total revenue of the Art Academy of Latvia in 2022 in 12 months was EUR 9 652 058.00. The amount of the basic funding of studies granted to a higher education institution or college from the state budget funds for the implementation of bachelor, professional and master study programmes shall be calculated using the following formula (Regulations approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 12 December 2006 "Procedures for Financing Institutions of Higher Education and Colleges from the Funds of the State Budget (SAR, page 41). AAL's Erasmus mobility funding is essential for the creative and scientific activities of students and lecturers (SAR, page 42).

1.3.2.

AAL has identified and maintained various facilities and infrastructure resources, including historical buildings, rented premises, and specialized workshops. These resources are available for teaching, research, and creative work, ensuring that students and teaching staff have access to the necessary tools and environments. AAL demonstrates a strategic approach to infrastructure development. They continuously assess their needs in alignment with industry and business trends. This forward-looking approach includes both existing premises and the development of new infrastructure for example new workshops together with Art and Design school. Importantly, they consider the adaptability of these resources to current and future requirements. AAL reviews the actual use of premises and infrastructure regularly and adjusts their plans accordingly. Academy has demonstrated that investments are made where needed most, avoiding unnecessary expenses. Unfortunately the Latgale Branch is left behind. Since academic staff and students are very patriotic about the branch and it also serves as a cultural point in the region, premises require renovations to ensure that infrastructure availability is at the same level as in Riga. AAL collaborates with industry and businesses, taking into account trends and potential areas of cooperation. This approach can lead to beneficial partnerships and keep the academy's infrastructure aligned with real-world needs. For example employers named examples how they are lending their gallery space for students to display their works also with potential to sell the works. The academy ensures the availability of premises and infrastructure, even when subject to restrictions or conversions. This reflects their commitment to maintaining a flexible and accommodating environment for students and staff. During the interviews students confirmed that they are allowed and can get approval to stay on the premises for extended periods of time. AAL possesses a wide range of equipment and technology necessary for teaching, research, and creative work. They have standard classroom equipment, specialized workshop tools, digital equipment, and software. This comprehensive resource pool supports a contemporary learning process. AAL recognizes the shared use of infrastructure for both study projects and creative work. This approach fosters collaboration and ensures efficient utilization of resources. Nevertheless cooperation on bigger joint projects can be improved, opening new channels for interdisciplinarity within the academy. Currently each department in the academy is focused on more individual work rather than working on joint projects. Apart from practical facilities, AAL has a research infrastructure, including a library, information center, methodology fund, restoration laboratory and two scientific institutes. These resources support both academic and creative endeavors. In case of purchasing any type of materials inquiry is forwarded to the library in case of literature or to the study programme director/study field director, which afterwards seeks the financial support opportunities to fulfill or deny the requirement. Regarding Latgale branch during the site visit, staff also indicated that on some occasions they are traveling together to the capital to allow students to participate in guest lectures that are being held in Riga, or visit interesting exhibitions etc. This allows students to be a part of the cultural events held at the capital. Staff members that are traveling are being fully supported from the AAL side financially. Overall, the physical resources, such as studios, technology, wood, metal, stone workshops, photography, video,

printing, textiles etc are in place and play an important role in the successful operation of the study field and its study programmes

Regarding the infrastructure in the branch, currently they have set everything for the bachelor level study process. The branch director indicated that they are searching for facilities where to expand, which is a good sign and experts would like to encourage AAL to support this even further and expand the branch. Although all the facilities are in place and students have materials, the branch consists of two buildings and this brings small inconvenience for students to move between buildings. Moreover, if the branch will expand, the current premises will be just too small to maintain the growing student count. Otherwise the technological support in the branch is the same as in the Riga, students have access to the computers for processing digital art work if necessary, for the sculpting branch also have 3D printers to support students if needed for artistic creation.

1.3.3.

AAL's library collection is substantial and includes a range of art literature and sources necessary for studies and research. It boasts historical publications and rare items acquired over several decades, demonstrating a commitment to preserving art-related heritage. The library collection is diverse in terms of languages, accommodating students and staff with materials in Latvian, English, Russian, German, and other foreign languages. This language diversity enhances accessibility for a broader audience. AAL has modernized its library cataloging with the BIS Alise library information system. This system provides an electronic catalog that makes it easier for students and staff to find and reserve necessary information resources remotely. Unfortunately library representatives said that students don't have remote access to databases and specific materials, the access point is only through library computers. Academy needs to address this issue and allow students to access all library e-materials remotely through student profiles. AAL actively maintains and updates its collection in line with demand, trends, and the academy's collection policy. The involvement of teaching staff in selecting relevant educational and scientific literature enriches the collection. Library should send out a newsletter about all the new purchases to raise awareness about the new materials available. Currently only the ordering party is being informed about purchase of the required materials. The library subscribes to periodicals, with titles selected in consultation with department heads and the Rector. This approach ensures that the library stays current in providing the latest publications to users. The availability of free test versions and the upcoming access to scholarly eBooks and visual arts databases further enhances resource availability. The library's facilities include computers, scanners, printers, photocopiers, and Wi-Fi internet, providing a well-equipped environment for research and study. The library also adapts its opening hours during examination periods, prioritizing student needs. Apart from the library, AAL's Information Centre and Methodical Fund collect and organize various materials, including theses, scientific works, and art history materials. These resources enrich the academy's educational and research environment. Academy also should seek opportunities to digitalise the materials of the library, this would further enhance material remote availability to the students. Regarding the Latgale branch, since there are staff members that are going from Latgale to Riga and vice versa, usually they are the ones that can support the branch with information and methodological material provision if additional resources are needed. None of the involved stakeholders showed indications that they are lacking information or any type of materials in the branch. At the same time students confirmed that they would like to have more support from AAL to go to Riga, so they have accommodation and transport from the branch. The AAL Institute of Art History is rich in professional literature, and the publications published by this institute are also valuable and significant, which unfortunately, after discussions with the representatives of the AAL library, cannot be found in the AAL library. After discussion with the students of the AAL Latgale branch, it is clear that students mainly find literature for the study process in other libraries or on the Internet, because the branch library's resources are insufficient, which should be strengthened.

1.3.4.

During the experts' visit, the team of experts observed that technology is widely and appropriately used in the study programmes, including in all sub-programmes, except for the Latgale branch, where the use of technology on site is limited. The information and communication technology solutions used to ensure the study process, as far as they are used, are sufficient.

Based on SAR and after Expert received information in person during the visit, the AAL uses several information systems (IS) to support students, staff and processes: HORIZON - accounting and personnel management information system; LAIS - student accounting information system and study process support system; MOODLE e-learning environment; MEDUS - document management system (SAR, page 46).

It is relatively difficult to understand the use of the Moodle system in AAL practice, because the experts' perception of its content and accessibility to students is relatively opaque. During the MOODLE presentation experts did not see the full utilization of moodle system because of language barrier, but were made sure that students have access to different materials, links, quizzes etc. proving that AAL e-learning environments can and are being used to provide students with all digital tools they need to successfully achieve study course learning outcomes.

1.3.5.

In accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Latvia and the Law on Higher Education Institutions, AAL has defined, implemented and complied with the Referee for the recruitment of teaching staff, which is held through an open competition procedure for certain open vacancies.

Guest lecturers from other institutions in Latvia and abroad are also invited to ensure a qualitative study process.

The number of visiting lecturers from abroad should be increased, especially for the programmes implemented by AAL in the Latgale branch, ensuring an equally high-quality study process. During the site visits all stakeholders that can potentially apply for teaching positions confirmed that they are aware about the procedures on how to become a member of academic staff in the Academy. Experts also have been introduced to the procedure of the election and evaluation of potential candidates. Specific annex provided an example of how the professor was evaluated for the position. During the site visit staff members all indicated that they are aware about how to get elected into academic positions or how to obtain higher positions.

1.3.6.

The professional and didactic development needs of AAL teachers are purposefully determined, which can be identified by analyzing the AAL self-assessment report and judging.

The professional and didactic development needs of the teaching staff are determined at the beginning of employment in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the Law on Scientific Activity, the Education Law, the Constitution of the Academy, the valid normative acts and taking into account, the Decision of the Council for Higher Education on Sectoral Professors' Councils (AIP(CHE) 24. 1.10/17), recommendations on the procedure for the election of professors and associate professors and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 129 of 25 February 2021 "Procedures for Evaluating the Scientific and Teaching Qualifications or Results of Artistic Creation Work of an Applicant for the Position of Professor or Associate Professor and of a Professor or Associate Professor Holding the Position". (SAR, page 52).

After conversations with teachers during the Expert visit, the lecturers are motivated and financially supported for research and scientific trips by participating in conferences and other research and creative projects. It is possible for teachers to use a 6-month paid creative leave for professional or creative work.

Until today, 102 AAL academic staff members have upgraded their qualifications and received course participation certificates both in theoretical sessions and practical speech training and the Moodle digital platform tools workshops (SAR, page 51).

Based on information on the Experts visit, the large part of the academy's teachers study in the scientific or practical doctoral study programmes of AAL or other universities.

1.3.7.

According to the information available to Experts group in conversations with the AAL management and teaching staff, the academic, research and administrative workload of teaching staff is made up of the proportion of 7/10 academic work and 3/10 research and administrative work out of 1000 academic hours, which is fully applied to all academic staff, which is not against the Law of Higher Education Institutions. Since this is a new approach to the Academy staff, during the site interviews staff indicated that such changes have been introduced recently and did not mention that workload would feel unbalanced. To give comprehensive assessment whether such division of workload is balanced, more time is needed. In general experts conclude that such a model can ensure study process and artistic creation. Regarding administrative work none of the involved parties during the site visits displayed any indications that administrative work is overwhelming other aspects of everyday study process. Staff members also said that administrative work is a normal part of their jobs and does not take that much time, so it can be considered as appropriate or balanced.

1.3.8.

The study implementation spaces are not suitable for students with physical disability, AAL is aware of the necessary support for students, it is planned to build an elevator in the main building of AAL to ensure that students with special needs can get in or move while receiving study opportunities. Students from foreign countries are provided with an individual approach, communication is conducted in English, which is at an appropriate level for the successful implementation of the study process. AAL will provide the number of students by organizing fee-based preparatory courses, most of whom continue their studies at AAL, which is a form of long-term student attraction established and justified by the Academy. There are no specific financial support tools for students to apply if they require something specific to reach their study goals. All of the materials and premises, infrastructure used to do their study work is being discussed with the supervisors, study course responsables on individual basis to meet requirements set by the study programme and specific study courses.

It seems that it is too early to judge the arrangement of the infrastructure in the AAL Latgale branch, which the AAL management should seriously think about. During the visit in Latgale Branch, director of Branch indicated that they are currently discussing with Rector potential plans to find and expand premises for the needs of the branch. Since currently there are no solid agreements or decisions made, experts only can praise the Academy's awareness of special needs in the Branch and encourage AAL to continue supporting the Branch. If the expansion will be successful experts see potential to also start providing Master level studies in the Branch. During the site interviews students and graduates mentioned interesting aspects about entrepreneurship and accounting, that these subjects should be closer to the end of studies. Since students usually at the beginning of studies are not familiar with how to sell their artistic work, they would like to have courses that can help them later on in their studies. AAL should consider open discussions with students in regards to this topic, since this can boost their confidence in managing finances and obtaining financial stability with their work. Additionally experts see that for example Alumni Association also can be involved in this process, for example by providing specific accounting or general entrepreneurship courses as part of a life-long education module. This way AAL also can financially benefit if the students and graduates would attend such courses.

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

In general, AAL maintains adequate resources and provisions when implementing study programmes, ensuring the successful integration of a study process that aligns with the academy's scientific and creative endeavors. State-based funding supports all study levels and their corresponding programmes, distributed proportionally among AAL's offerings.

These resources are readily available for teaching, research, and creative work, providing students

and teaching staff with the necessary tools and environments. AAL demonstrates a strategic approach to infrastructure development, focusing on modernization, maintenance, and expansion. Latgale branch is also being supported in terms of staff member exchange, information provision, material technical base for successful implementation of Bachelor level studies. Experts would still urge the AAL to support even more and expand the Branch in terms of infrastructure, since students there were very enthusiastic about art studies and indicated that they would also attend Master level studies if that would be possible. As the biggest weakness currently in the Branch, experts found lack of large facilities where to exhibit students' work and second facilities being divided in two buildings, that are not unified and bring small inconvenience to the study process, facilities of course could be more spacious.

Moreover, AAL's library collection is substantial, offering a wide array of art literature and essential sources for academic studies and research.

Strengths:

- 1) For the implementation of programmes, AAL has a good material and technical base for the implementation of practical study tasks.
- 2) LAA has an extensive library with relevant art literature and the most current periodicals.
- 3) The academic, research and administrative workload of AAL teaching staff is balanced.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Material and technical base and infrastructure in the AAL Latgale branch should be improved.
- 2) Remote access to the AAL library resources, databases, and ordering books for students currently is unavailable.
- 3) The accessibility of the environment in AAL is insufficient for people with mobility impairments.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1.

LAA is an important research and artistic institution based on the specific national identity as a small nation in the global changing world. In research and artistic creation, they are involved in small and large projects with other institutions and individuals and are looking for external financial resources. According to SAR they have 10 senior researchers, 7 researchers and 52 doctoral students involved in the research, of which five foreign researchers. According to the information from the visit, AAL is currently participating in two research projects, both of which are state-funded. In the document Development Strategy 2023-2030 (p.26) AAL organizes an international conference - the Art Academy of Latvia International Scientific conference - once a year, which is organized by the master's students. The obtained data shows high professional achievements of researchers and teaching staff. This is also confirmed by the fact that in 2017 AAL has received a high assessment for its scientific work and research quality by the Republic of Latvia Ministry of Education and Science for the period between 2013 and 2019 (see AAL Development Strategy 2023-2030). It is evident that the research and artistic results correspond very adequately to the development of the study field and are completely consistent with the development of the AAL's goals, where it has been emphasized many times that the main goal is building of national cultural identity in challenging global and regional circumstances and therefore the research and artistic creation is lined with the Latvia's art ecosystem. It is especially important to emphasize that the establishment of a Joint Professional Doctoral study programme is particularly important, as this ensures academic development at an artistic level. The relevance of the latter is particularly important, as this is how the AAL completes the educational loop of the entire study field Arts, and thus also helps in monitoring and developing the quality of the programmes as a whole. The AAL works closely with

the national art sector and has established good cooperation with entrepreneurs in the research and artistic creation. The AAL's research capacity is conducted through its two research institutes – Institute of Art History and Institute of Contemporary Art, Design, and Architecture. Researchers are involved in the study process as they conduct research in close connection with the learning process. Research work is also closely connected with the work of students, other teachers, and professionals in other fields. It is clear, according to the AAL Development Strategy Document 2023-2030 and onsite visit, that works of art created by students and teaching staff are displayed at the AAL both buildings (Kalpaka Bulvaris 13 and Kronvalda Bulvaris 4 in Riga). To exhibit artistic creation they also use experimental exhibit space called 'Pilot'. Exhibitions of students' work are exhibited twice a year and open to the public. They exhibit artistic work of students also abroad. In 2023 the AAL plans to exhibit in Turin (Italy) and Tartu (Estonia). The scientific research follows the main strategy written in AAL Development Strategy 2023-2030; they regularly publish the Journal of Art History and Theory and start to work on seven-volume publication Art History in Latvia (in Latvian and English); there are three volumes published, in 2014, 2016 and 2019. But on the web site, under the 'Documents' tab, they do not have any specific document under the 'Research' sub-tab that provides more detailed information related to this important activity within the AAL. They do not have developed joint research projects with the educational institutions with which they carry out joint practical doctoral programme. Given that the cooperation is already underway, it would also make sense to form a joint research platform that would develop more widespread and in-depth interdisciplinary research projects.

1.4.2.

During on-site interviews it was emphasized that AAL involves students at all three study programme levels in research and artistic creation projects. Both doctoral study programmes enable and encourage students to participate in international conferences and events. As is stated in SAR they also regularly participate in exhibition projects. From the on-site interviews it was emphasized that they work well vertically and horizontally, AAL have EU-funded projects for additional training that correspond to the development of the AAL's goals. The obtained data shows (the AAL Development Strategy 2023-2030) that they organize events within the AAL, which are aimed at disseminating information about research results to employees and students. In 2023 they plan to have 10 seminars, symposiums and other research-related events like seminars and lectures in order to transfer scientific, research and art knowledge with a purpose of connecting research and artistic outcomes to the study process (see AAL Development Strategy 2023-2030). This year, ten students are involved in the implementation of the research projects and even 30 students are involved in the dissemination of results by participating in local and international conferences, seminars, and other events where results are shared.

1.4.3.

The AAL participates in international research projects and competitions, and implements projects funded by the State Research Programme, the EU funding for research and innovation Horizon 2020. During the interviews it was emphasized that AAL has established good cooperation with Poland and Germany in order to conduct various research projects. An important part of international cooperation of students within the framework of the YES (Young European Students) research project, which was financed by the EU. It is necessary to point out the new Joint Masters' Study Programme SDSI – Service Design Strategies and Innovations that is funded by the Erasmus Mundus funds and is international cooperation of consortium of three higher education institutions – Art Academy of Latvia (Latvia), University of Lapland (Finland) and The Estonia Academy of Arts (Estonia). In the first year all students are at the LAA in Kuldīga (Latvia) and continue their studies by splitting into two groups, one half at The Estonia Academy of Arts in Tallinn (Estonia) and the other half at the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi (Finland). The international joint master's study programme also includes students from a range of geographical locations, nationalities and backgrounds. In 2023 around 700 candidates apply for only 30 spots in the programme, which is in

all segments of its development focused on an applied research interdisciplinarity within the international study process. AAL has developed another master's sub-programme, which includes international cooperation in the fields of artistic creation and applied research in the implementation of the study process – POST. Its study process includes cooperation with different educational and art institutions in the UK. Both programmes can be an example for in-depth and high-quality development of international cooperation and its integration into the study process in other study programme fields as well. In the document AAL Development Strategy 2023-2030 is stated that in 2023 they sustain opportunities for mobility and that the percentage of research staff taking mobility opportunities is 50%, and the plan is to increase that into 90% in 2030. In order to empower international cooperation the recommendation is to highly follow that strategy. It is also noted that the number of teaching staff from abroad that is involved in the teaching process and in evaluation of the results of the study process is high, 10. To ensure the continuous internationalization of research and artistic cooperation, it is encouraging that AAL is a member of international organizations and professional associations, such as: CUMULUS-Global Association of Art and Design Education and Research, ELIA network, NORDPLUS programme, CIRBUS network and KUNO network. In general, most research projects are financed from national funds. As a good example of Joint master's programme SDSI with funds obtained from Erasmus Mundus tender, successful applications for European research funds would help the quality development and expansion of research activity at AAL and its internationalization. As it was stated during onsite visit, finding research funds is mainly the responsibility of the researchers themselves. It was not mentioned or it is not indicated in the documents, that they cooperate with the Project office.

1.4.4.

The AAL has two research institutes, of which the Institute of Art History has its own website. From the data available there, it is clear that some researchers at the Institute of Art History are also involved in the teaching process. They are lecturers at several courses as well as BA, MA and PhD supervisors. From the on-site interviews with researchers at the Institute for Contemporary Art, Design and Architecture it is evident that a smaller group of researchers are fully involved in teaching at the AAL. In the AAL Development Strategy 2023-2030 it is clearly stated that the percentage of teaching staff being actively involved in scientific and creative activities is rather high, up to 95%. According to the group of experts, the involvement of researchers in the pedagogical process is very high and is extremely valuable for the dissemination of the research results in teaching content. However, it is of great importance to ensure that the ratio between the two workloads is suitable for the quality development of both areas at the AAL.

1.4.5.

In the document AAL Development Strategy 2023-2030 is stated that the number of students participating in completion of art research projects is twenty in 2023. During interviews, the participants confirmed that most students regularly participate in artistic creation and applied research. The system of involving students in research artistic activity is well-established and well-functioning. According to the data from the interviews, the students of all study levels are very satisfied with their involvement in various artistic and research projects, which enable them not only to acquire the necessary knowledge and competence, but also to know and form a network outside the academic environment. This is achieved by bringing together students from all three levels of study together with external institutions, by integrating the study process into research projects, and obtaining additional financial resources. In addition to that the AAL regularly encourages and organizes student participation with their works at Milan Design Week and the Red Dot Award competition.

1.4.6.

In 2021 the AAL in cooperation with Jazeps Vitols Latvian Academy of Music and The Latvian Academy of Culture, implemented a new art-based research professional doctorate. A joint professional doctoral programme in Art brings innovative solutions in the study field since

supervisors from all three institutions can participate in the doctoral research and artistic work. The understanding of a work of art in this study programme is interdisciplinary and goes beyond the narrow framework of the individual study fields covered by each educational institution. At the Master's level, they have one programme and one sub-programme that include strong innovative approaches to the study process - SDSI and POST. The fact that students highly approve of the integration of innovative methods into study process can also be seen from the analysis of the data on student evaluations of courses, since out of the 17 evaluated courses on the POST master study programme, as many as 12 receive the maximum score (70,6%), only five a little less. The average rating of the latter was 3,7, which is still above the average grade for all master's study programmes. Innovative solutions are applied also in the Joint Master's programme SDSI - Service Design Strategies and Innovations in which focus is on interdisciplinary studies and cross-specialisation in design, management, business and social sciences. Innovation is also in the awarding of diplomas, as in the case of the Joint Professional doctoral study programme and Joint Master's programme Service Design, Strategies and Innovation diplomas issued by all participating higher education institutions (three each in both programmes). Experts suggest that some of the innovative (involvement of experts from practice, implementation of study courses in cooperation with external institutions in the field of culture and business, cooperation on study programmes with educational institutions outside Latvia ect.) solutions implemented by the mentioned study programmes start to be included by other study programmes, especially those that are rated lower in student surveys.

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

The scientific research work and artistic performance are at a high level from the obtained data. The results and activities of the latter are included in various innovative ways in the study processes, which is particularly evident from the two research institutes and new Joint Master Study programme SDSI - Service Design, Strategies and Innovations and one sub-programme POST developed in cooperation with educational institutions abroad and in Latvia. The AAL has successfully started implementing a Joint Professional doctoral study programme in Arts that closes the educational loop in the study field of Arts. They have a relatively strong publishing activity, which is based mainly on national research funds. The ALL closely cooperates with the cultural sector in Latvia and is, also for this reason, an important institution for strengthening the national identity. They have established the process of involvement of students of all three levels in research work and art creation at the AAL, and at the same time they effectively include the results of the research into the implementation of the study programmes. International cooperation is well established. They are particularly good at managing student mobility and training mobilities for employees. They have slightly less international cooperation in the field of research projects application and art creations. Researchers are strongly involved in the pedagogical process, which can in turn cause a lack of time and engagement for research work.

Strengths:

- 1) Two research institutes (Institute of the Art History and Institute for Contemporary Art, Design and Architecture) have been established and are successfully operating, with evident excellence in research results.
- 2) One master's programme (Joint Master Study programme SDSI - Service Design, Strategies and Innovations) and one sub-programme (POST) have been established, which actively include innovative approaches and research work as the foundation and focal point of the pedagogical approach in the study process itself.
- 3) One master's programme (Joint Master Study programme SDSI - Service Design, Strategies and Innovations) and one sub-programme (POST) have developed high involvement of the students in

applied research and/or artistic creation.

4) The Joint Professional doctoral programme "Arts" is an example of a meaningful and innovative integration of educational institutions within Latvia with the aim of actively integrating research work into artistic creation.

5) AAL has an established exhibition space open to the public, in which its students and teachers regularly exhibit, and it is also open for external exhibition projects.

Weaknesses:

1) There are not enough agreements on research projects with educational institutions with which they already cooperate.

2) There is no continuous funding of research activities by submitting international research projects to various EU and regional tenders.

3) Due to the small number of staff, the Project office is insufficiently involved in obtaining EU and regional funds for continuous financing of research and art creation projects.

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

The level of development of scientific research and artistic creation in some cases highly exceeds standard norms, especially compared with the level of technical infrastructure, research resources and the number of researchers, all that is necessary for quality research work. The research institutes are well developed and embedded in the Latvian and research community abroad.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1.

According to (SAR, p. 70) AAL is closely linked to the business sector and arts market, ensuring the transfer of knowledge and skills, building an ecosystem of art, design, architecture and art science. It also incorporates the relationship residuals into the study process to provide students with skills and competences required by the future labor market. It is by no means a mutually beneficial relationship since, in general, the graduates of AAL are highly sought out professionals that deliver highly valued products and services. The report also cites that AAL is involved in public education and lifelong learning activities. A special role in ensuring the diversity of cultural and artistic events is played by cooperation projects with Kuldīga municipality, whereby the development of artist residencies and design projects sustain the joint master's level study programme "Service Design Strategies and Innovations (SDSI)" (45214). SAR stressed that Kuldīga municipality supports a summer school to review the quality, challenges and successes of the study process at SDSI and also supports its business incubator that organized its first SDSI Open conference in June 2023. Likewise, AAL's experimental exhibition space "Pilot", opened in 2020 on Riharda Vagnera Street 3, was initiated by the EU4ART alliance in cooperation with the Erasmus+ program and Riga municipality.

In addition to cooperation with industry, AAL and its staff are involved in the development of cultural and educational policy, providing policy recommendations to state institutions and by participating in joint projects with the National Council for Culture, the Visual Arts Council and other industry councils, working groups, evaluation commissions, governmental and non-governmental institutions,

TYPAs Printing and Paper Arts Centre, EKA Graphics Programme, CUBE digital, H2E, Needle Factory, Valmiermuiža, Riga Stradins University, and Ventspils University College, to name just a few.

Notwithstanding the rapport, during the on-site visit the employers did point out the communication channels between the administration of specific programs and employers could be significantly improved, as they do not have input in designing and updating the curriculums.

Starting in 2021 the study programme of the practical doctorate level was jointly implemented by three art high education institutions in Latvia – the Latvian Academy of Culture, the Jāzeps Vitols Latvian Academy of Music and the Art Academy of Latvia. Cross-disciplinary research and study is carried out in all three institutions. In their doctoral thesis, they collaborate with various experts and institutions, especially galleries and museums and non-governmental organizations. Within AAL they have a very well-established cooperation with Riga School of Design and Art, Romans Suta and Aleksandra Belcova Museum and private gallery Māksla-XO, especially at the Bachelor's and Master's level, when students apply for internships.

1.5.2.

As stated in (SAR, p.71), AAL's Internationalisation Strategy is based on three clearly articulated objectives: first, to provide internationally competitive art and design research and artistic activities, second, to promote the international competitiveness of students and academic staff through effective and diverse academic exchange, and, third, by building and sustaining high-level international cooperation with relevant stakeholders. The report also indicates that the partner universities are chosen based on the compatibility of study programmes, in terms of content, the facilities and equipment available to students, and whether the exchange partner is a national leader in their field, whether students from partner universities have received awards in international competitions. Hence, the bar for being a partner university of AAL is high. The Art Academy of Latvia is also a member of several strategic networks: CUMULUS, the global association of art, design and media universities and colleges, ELIA, the European League of Institutes of the Arts, as well as its sub-network PARADOX, NORDPLUS, the Nordic Council of Ministers' programme, CIRRUS, Nordic-Baltic network of Art and Design higher education, KUNO, the Nordic-Baltic Art Academy Network, to name just a few. During the on-site visit, the representatives from AAL have indicated that they are in the lead position in the Baltic states in terms of providing a high caliber educational environment, artistic growth and professional development.

1.5.3.

A very good system of analysis and monitoring of the mobility of teaching staff as well as students has been developed. It is clear from the interviews that students as well as teaching staff are aware of the possibility of different forms of mobility. The conditions and methods of applying for the mobility are published on the website. An interview participant highlighted the good functioning of the office for international relations and their assistance in applications for mobility. The mobility analysis documents show that AAL has a high level of mobility – in the period of the last five years the number of incoming Erasmus guest lecturers in total is 71 and outgoing Erasmus mobility (teaching) is 79. Given that in the same period, the number of outgoing Erasmus mobility (exchange and experience) is much higher, in total 390 (the ratio between two mobilities is 1:4,94), it would be necessary to develop an internal system in the future in the direction of increasing teaching mobility. In addition to the Erasmus mobility, LAA has developed two regional mobility programs – KUNO and CIRRUS. In the last five years, 43 outgoing faculty mobility within the KUNO programme and 42 within the CIRRUS programme were carried out. The number of incoming teaching staff mobility was lower under these two programmes, only 14 in KUNO and 2 in CIRRUS. As far as student Erasmus mobility is concerned, 403 mobilities were carried out during the last five years, of which 203 at the bachelor's level, 190 at the master's level, and 10 at the PhD level. In the same period, LAA had 263 incoming student Erasmus mobilities at two levels of study (Bachelor and Master). Outgoing incoming student short term mobility was carried out also within KUNO and CIRRUS programmes. It's clear from the AAL Development Strategy 2023-2030 that they have a

relatively high share of overall mobility, namely 30% in 2023.

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

AAL has developed cooperation with various stakeholders in Latvia and the region, which can be seen in the development of the new study programmes and also the successful introduction of the students and graduates to the labor market. Academy has also established strong and lasting cooperations with institutions abroad within the Joint master's study programme SDSI and in doing so they contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the specific study field and the relevant study programme. They have also developed strong cooperation with partners abroad in sub-programme POST, and in the joint practical doctoral programme they have developed cooperation with two other Latvian institutions of higher education. In support, they have a well-developed system of mobility, which is recognized among students and staff members as high-quality and necessary for the successful development of relevant study programmes. The study programme as a whole is strongly embedded in Latvian institutional culture, with continuous cooperation with various museums and galleries, institutions, events and individuals.

AAL is closely linked to the business sector and arts market, ensuring the transfer of knowledge and skills, building an ecosystem of art, design, architecture and art science. AAL is involved in public education and lifelong learning activities by providing policy recommendations to state institutions and by participating in joint projects with several key stakeholders.

The bar for being a partner university of AAL is high, and its partner universities are chosen in terms of the quality content, whether the exchange partner is a national leader in their field, whether students from partner universities have received awards in international competitions. The Art Academy of Latvia is also a member of several strategic networks. Notwithstanding the rapport, during the on-site visit the employers did point out the communication channels between the administration of specific programs and employers could be significantly improved, as they do not have input in designing and updating the curriculums.

Strengths:

- 1) A very successfully developed mobility system, for students, teaching and non-teaching staff. In addition to the Erasmus mobility programme, they also successfully implement two regional short term mobility programmes.
- 2) In addition to successful cooperation with various governmental and private institutions in Latvia, they have developed a joint professional doctoral study program with three reference higher educational institutions in Latvia.
- 3) They successfully manage the SDSI Joint master's study programme with two higher educational institutions in the region, in Estonia and Finland.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The relationship between teaching and training mobilities is not balanced. Teaching mobilities deviate too much downwards compared to training mobilities.
- 2) The communication channels between the employment body and the administration of individual programmes are not efficient, as the employers have little input in designing and updating the curriculums.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The collaborations established through the development of joint master's programme and professional doctorate programme contribute to the achievement and more successful development of the aims of the study programmes. International and national corporations enable stable development not only of the programmes but also of research and art quality outcomes within the study field.

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

Analysis

1.6.1. The previous evaluation for accreditation took place in 2011. This was a long time ago and the recommendations made by the team of experts then were very few. Namely they had asked for issues related to the improvement of the teaching methods, increase the internationalization of the AAL, as well as development and improvement of resources such as the Library etc. According to the SAR (p. 76) the few recommendations made during the reporting period, were taken into account and improved. This improvement was also witnessed by the team of experts not only from the documentation provided but by the on-site visit (19-21 September 2023) to the premises, the discussions during the meetings with the higher management, the team responsible for the SAR, academic faculty, students, alumni and stakeholders.

Notwithstanding the improvement, not all Annexes for the Implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures have been received at the time of the reporting. The joint academic master's degree study program "Service design strategies and innovations" (45214) licensed on May, 12th, 2021, had a few long term recommendations: (1) to improve AAL's support mechanisms for teaching staff in order to promote the strengthening of the research field, (2) to develop and approve a strategic action plan for the next period, and (3) to evaluate financial support mechanisms, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and other institutions, in order to provide support to local students. But at the moment only the annex, the implementation of the recommendations of the "Joint Doctoral Study Programme in the Arts" (report of the expert group on licensing of the study programme on 25 September 2020) is provided and can be regarded as the program specific and somewhat comprehensive. All recommendations for the "Joint Doctoral Study Programme in the Arts, given in the Annex 3 have been satisfied. Other recommendations such as "Expert Opinion for licensing Joint MSP_Service Design Strategies and Innovation" (supplied additionally) are scant and more general and less specific to the JMPSP program, be it "[improvement of] LMA's support mechanisms for teaching staff in order to promote the strengthening of the research field", or "[approval of] a strategic action plan for the next period, or "[evaluation of] financial support mechanisms, in cooperation with KM, Ministry of Education and Culture and other institutions, in order to provide support to local students". They can be applicable to any program realized at the Academy, are, therefore, subjective to measure, and within the context of ongoing developments at the Academy, may be deemed as satisfied. With respect to the document "LMA Study field assessment_Experts Opinion 2013.PDF_English", the document is actually signed on 27.11.2011, and the recommendation given on sufficient funding, hence, is outdated and superfluous, since no rational governmental authority would be in position not to support the core Academy of the State. Given the ongoing efforts by the Academy to increase funding, during the on-site visit, such efforts were evident in new buildings acquired and ongoing rapport with local municipalities, in addition to the EU grants obtained.

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

It became evident that there is a positive attitude towards change and progression of the study field and study programmes at all levels (BA, MA, DSP) and this change needs to be intensified. The AAL

has opened up to new cooperation and projects and has managed to bring in funds that have been used for the updating and upkeep of physical resources. It should be noted that there are two study programmes that only went through initial registration - "licensed stage" - quite recently so the recommendations are still ongoing.

Strengths:

- 1) Positive attitude towards making change.
- 2) Physical resources, such as studios, technology, wood, metal, stone workshops, photography, video, printing, textiles etc are in place and play an important role in the successful operation of the study field and its study programmes.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Library resources need updating and upkeep further.
- 2) Further attention to Human resource management should be taken - more financial incentives needed to support faculty in engaging more in managerial and promotional/marketing positions.
- 3) The status on the Implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures for the Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations" and corresponding to the long-term recommendation is still outstanding.

Assessment of the requirement [4]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All the recommendations made by the previous team of experts during the accreditation process in 2011 were met and implemented by AAL. SAR (p. 76) as well as for the "Joint Doctoral Study Programme in the Arts" (report of the expert group on licensing of the study programme on 25 September 2020). Since the period of time since the licensing of the last 2 study programmes was quite short, recommendations are still in process and in progress and this has been verified during the site visit.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

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|--|
| 1) Review and remap the administrative organizational structures that control the study process in order to avoid overlapping the responsibilities of the administrative and make them more efficient. |
| 2) To involve all the population of the AAL (management, faculty, administration, students, alumni, stakeholders) in the quality assurance processes of studies. |
| 3) To make the quality assurance process more systematic and fully formalized the procedure for gathering data, analyzing, evaluating and implementing. |
| 4) Develop more robust marketing strategies for the extension of the Academy at its Rezekne branch to incentivize the enrollment in the periphery and enhance economic activities there. |
| 5) Disperse the responsibility of managing all study levels, study departments from one person to several persons that are actively communicating, for example via study programme councils. |
| 6) Since students are involved in decision making bodies of the AAL, include the student governing body as a part of AAL structure. |

7) Develop AI (Artificial intelligence) usage guidelines, introduce them to the stakeholders and to the study process, so the Academy can monitor and have the upper hand on how students can use AI tools in the study process.

8) Integrate into the Moodle system anti-plagiarism tools for staff members, that are checking anti-plagiarism of students on an everyday basis where it is possible, as well as for the defense works of students. Solely relying on the opinion of the supervisor about plagiarism is not acceptable and can not ensure normal academic integrity towards plagiarism.

9) To improve the level of teaching mobility compared to training mobility from ratio 1:5 to 1:2. It is of great importance to encourage the teaching staff to carry out pedagogical work (lectures, workshops) at higher education institutions abroad.

10) Sign short term agreements on cooperation on specific research topics with educational and research institutions with which AAL already cooperates. The latter would be the basis for applications to research grants.

11) Make website presentations of teaching staff at individual levels of study programmes and short selection of their bibliography or/and artistic achievements, as well as the subjects in which they participate.

12) To ensure transparency of the Academy's QA system, publish all of the reports on the website, so they are publicly available.

Long-term recommendations

1) Develop better and more effective strategies for infrastructure development at the Latgale branch by adopting a more efficient rapport with the local municipality and other relevant stakeholders; distribution of funding for the Latgale branch needs to be reassessed. The importance of the Latgale branch and be put forward as a political decision. that can elevate the branch to develop and grow stronger both in the number of academic domains as well as with its physical resources which are currently crumbled.

2) To update and upkeep further the Library resources.

3) To provide more financial incentives needed to support faculty in engaging more in managerial and promotional/marketing positions.

4) Develop more frequent exchange of staff members from Riga to Latgale branch and vice versa, to close the administrative gap between Latgale and Riga.

5) Strengthen the Project office in terms of personnel, which will help with the success of applications for EU research grants.

6) The accessibility of the environment in AAL and in the branch should be arranged for people with mobility impairments.

7) Involve stakeholders more into process of preparation of quality reports and SAR for accreditation.

8) Conduct annual survey of teaching and administrative staff satisfaction and suggestions to further improve work environment and QA system.

9) Include and make more diverse membership of different commissions, so not only highest management is represented but also lecturers etc.

10) Include employer representatives more into decision making bodies regarding curriculum and evaluation of student final thesis.

11) The organizational structure should include key committees (e.g. for quality process, for student affairs, for habilitation ect,) which will consist up to five (5) members from different study fields and levels of study. Student members must be also included in the composition of the committees. The composition of the committees should change every two years. The list of commissions and their members should be published on the website.

12) Attend to the implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures for the Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations" and corresponding to the long-term recommendation is still outstanding.

II - "Art" ASSESSMENT

II - "Art" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

According to (SAR, p. 84), the requirements for the compulsory part of the curriculum have been revised and implemented in line with Cabinet Regulation No 240 on National Academic Education Standards and the study course content has been updated to meet the demands of the market as reflected in many documents, such as, but not limited to the Latvian National Development Plan (2021), the Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy 2021-2027 (NAP2027), the Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (Latvia 2030); the Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022-2027 "Culture State", the Educational Development Guidelines 2021-2027, the Guidelines for Science, Technology Development and Innovation 2021-2027, the Guidelines for Digital Transformation 2021-2027; Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 Transforming Education and Training for the Digital Age, UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy for Europe 2021-2030, and the EU cultural policy initiative "The New European Bauhaus". However, no links to these documents have been provided. The duration of the programme is 4 years of full-time studies with the accreditation (Accreditation Commission Decision No 33 of 24.05.2013) extended until 31 December 2023. The title of the programme and the degree to be obtained - Bachelor of Arts and Humanities - complies with the requirements of the programme in accordance with Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 322 on the Classification of Latvian Education, according to the codes assigned: 43 - Academic education (Bachelor's degree), to be implemented after general or vocational secondary education. Duration of full-time studies: four years; for its subject areas of education: Arts, visual and plastic arts - 211; Art, Audiovisual and Media Arts - 213 Art, Design - 214 (SAR, p.85).

The graduates are well sought after due to their high skill level and contribute directly to the creative industries sector, in this respect the implementation language is reasonable and justified since one of the cornerstones of AAL is fostering the Latvian identity in art. The trajectory of its education is clear as to acquiring the skills, techniques and methodologies in a chosen artistic discipline, and the admission requirements (lined up with the Law on Higher Education Institutions as well as an equal competition, in accordance with Articles 45 and 46 of LAA) are stringent enough to ensure a quality enrollment. It does not follow that the candidates to the BSP "Art" program are

somewhat subjective as all admitted are on the basis of the centralized examination results submitted and in accordance with these Rules and the Special Aptitude and Readiness Examination. For those who might have difficulties in being accepted the Academy offers Preparatory Courses in order to pass the entry tests of their chosen department; the total duration of the courses is three years and the programme includes classes in drawing, painting and composition, even though the admittance is not guaranteed.

Most students in the programme study at the expense of the state budget, albeit a very few are paying students or those who convert from paying status to state support, but the enrollment dynamics also indicate that the enrollment curve is mostly flat with Latgale branch suffering the lowest enrollment. Although the program complies with the study field, its economic justification is textured: somewhat concerning is the average dropout rate at 33 annually, amounting to 25% loss of a student body a year, which considering the cost to the state budget is not a small number. In addition not only is the Latgale branch low in enrollment, it has a vital role to play in fostering the economic activity in the region, not limited to the security of the State. In this regard, albeit notable in excellence, the Latgale branch is in need of additional funding to sustain and attract a new pool of artists to reside and work in the area.

2.1.2.

SAR p.81 specifies that the main aim of the BSP “Art” is to provide higher education in the subject areas of art, as well as specialization in certain sub-programmes of visual arts, visual plastic arts, design, audiovisual media arts or art history in order to create preconditions for study, research and professional activity in art fields, as well as to provide a set of knowledge, skills and competences according to the level 6 of the Latvian Framework Classification of Education, yet, SAR does not specify under the parameters the aim and objectives of each sub-program separately, that is, (a) does not include an analysis of how each separate sub-programmes' aims/objectives and outcomes relate to the overall aims, objectives and outcomes of the study programme, and (b) no evaluation of the relevance of the study programme at the two implementation sites.

The tasks of the overarching programme are clear, such as, to provide fundamental understanding of the general features of visual art - 2D, 3D composition, to acquire the skills, techniques and methodologies of a specific artistic discipline, enabling professional, artistic, innovative or research activity, to analytically define and describe information, problems and solutions in their field of art or profession as well as the ability to reflect critically on the impact of their professional activity on the environment and society (SAR, pp 81-82). In this regard, the study programme is implemented by offering Bachelor of Humanities in Design (Design sub-programme), Bachelor of Humanities in Audiovisual and Media Arts (Audiovisual and Media Arts sub- programme), and Bachelor of Humanities degree in Visual Plastic Arts (Visual arts, visual plastic and art history sub-programme).

With respect to the admission requirements, they are lined up with the Law on Higher Education Institutions as well as an equal competition, in accordance with Articles 45 and 46 of LAA and other normative acts (SAR, p.85), i.e., the candidates to the BSP “Art” program are being admitted on the basis of the centralized examination results submitted and in accordance with these Rules and the Special Aptitude and Readiness Examination. Such requirements are knowledge and skills in drawing, painting, making completed works or projects in the specialty to which they are applying, in the form of a portfolio to demonstrate the basic knowledge in the practice and theory of visual arts, visual plastic arts, design, and audio-visual media arts. In this respect, the admission requirements are interrelated with the learning outcomes. One must add that the competition is high and the Academy offers Preparatory Courses for those who need additional training in order to pass the entry tests of their chosen department; the total duration of the courses is three years and the programme includes classes in drawing, painting and composition (in line with the requirements of the entry tests), yet, even upon having completed the courses, it not provide any extra points upon entrance, which ensures objectivity.

Furthermore, according to (SAR, p. 84), the requirements for the compulsory part of the curriculum

have been revised and implemented in line with Cabinet Regulation No 240 on National Academic Education Standards and other relevant documents cited in section 2.1.1 of this chapter. However, no links to these documents have been provided, but, more importantly, perhaps, it is a matter of translation but the description of the learning outcomes for BSP “Arts” is somewhat scant.

The implementation language is reasonable and justified since one of the cornerstones of AAL is fostering the Latvian identity in arts and its securing a proper place within the global arts scene. The majority of students speak fairly good English, which makes incoming mobility for the international teaching staff fairly effective.

The full course of study programme is 160 credits (240 ECTS), full-time, realized in Latvian, with full-time face-to-face attendance. The duration and scope of four years is an optimal choice for obtaining a degree. Upon graduation from the BSP “Art”, the residual degree acquired corresponds the a specific field in arts: Bachelor of Humanities in Design (43214), Bachelor of Humanities in Audiovisual and Media Arts (43213), and Bachelor of Humanities in Visual Plastic Arts (43211).

2.1.3.

BSP “Art” originally was accredited on 24 May 2013 for 6 years - until 31 December 2019 (Accreditation Commission Decision No 33 of 24.05.2013), afterwards accreditation was extended until 31 December 2023. According to (SAR, pp. 84-86), the total period since the previous accreditation is 10 years, during which the study content has been regularly reviewed and updated in accordance with the contemporary trends in the fields of visual arts, design and audio-visual media arts, taking into account the latest developments in theoretical and practical knowledge in response to employment and industry needs and priorities in accordance with the Latvian National Development Plan 2021-2023, the whole array state development guidelines, whereby the requirements for the compulsory part of the curriculum have been revised and implemented in line with Cabinet Regulation No 240 on National Academic Education Standards. In addition, on the 10th of October 2006 "On Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes", updated admission rules were approved by the Senate of the Art Academy of Latvia, with approval of the AIP on the compliance of the entrance examinations with the core studies. SAR does not specifically address the corrections made to the study programme’s parameters within the assessment of the study field, but at the site visit, it was confirmed the programme implements a rich diversification Visual Arts (majoring in Painting, Printmaking, or Sculpture), Visual Plastic Arts sub-programme (majoring in Textiles, Glass Art, or Ceramics), Design (majoring in Product Design, Graphic Design, Interior Design, Fashion Design, or Metal Design), Audio-visual Media Arts sub-programme (majoring in Visual Communication, Movement/ Image/ Sound, Environmental Art, Scenography); Art Theory (Art History and Theory, Restoration).

2.1.4.

According to (SAR, p. 86) since its foundation in 1919, at the establishment of the Latvian state, AAL has embodied the national school of art and design, its development and research synonymous with the core of the state functions, connected to education, research and creative-artistic processes with society and the cultural and creative industry of Latvia. While the report identifies its research, creative-artistic and educational projects, promoting diverse cultural and artistic developments in the regions of Latvia, especially its Latgale branch in Rēzekne to play a special role in ensuring the diversity of cultural and artistic events, the on-site visit was somewhat more complex. The panel of experts had found that its Latgale branch has a vital role to play not only in the economic activities of Latvia, but also, in fostering the economic activity in the region, not limited to the security of the State. In this regard, albeit notable in excellence, the Latgale branch is in need of additional funding to sustain and attract a new pool of artists to reside and work in the area. Furthermore, the Latgale branch of AAL needs a sustainable and strategically developed rapport with the local municipalities to offset the costs and benefits that seem to favor the main premises in Riga more both in terms of acquiring more space/buildings for instructions and creative work.

The economic and social rationale for the study programme is determined by the analysis of the

graduate employment survey, indicating the areas of the labor market where graduates are employable and contribute to the overall cultural and creative industries sector. The Annex 5 on the "Statistics on the students in the reporting period" indicates that BSP "Art" is implemented only in Latvian, that is, the students for the reporting period were enrolled only at the expense of the state budget, albeit in the academic year 2019/2020, one fee-paying student was enrolled in Visual Arts, Painting, and two fee-paying students were admitted to the programme in the academic year 2022/2023: one in Design, Fashion Design; one in Audio-visual Media Arts, Visual Communication. The enrollment dynamics also indicate that the most in demand programs are in Design and Audio-visual media arts. (SAR, p. 87) claim that "a gradual increase in the number of students has been observed", yet, by looking at the Annex 5, the enrollment curve is flat and stable, with Latgale branch suffering the lowest enrollment. The average dropout rate is 33 (also a flat curve) and within the ratio of roughly 130 incoming students annually, it makes a student body loss of 25% a year.

The graduates are well sought after due to their high skill level locally and internationally, by helping to shape national and European identity and to contribute directly to the creative industries sector and to the forms of employment of the individual entrepreneur. In line with the Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022-2027 "The State of Culture", that analyzes the current situation and global trends in the field of cultural employment, the most popular employment sectors for AAL's graduates are in Culture/Art; Education/Science; Media/Public Relations; Services; Construction/Real Estate, Information Technology/Telecommunications; Public Administration; Comprehensive and Vocational Primary and Secondary Education Institutions, Design Offices/Advertising Industry, Government, Municipalities and Non-Governmental Cultural Institutions, etc., (SAR, p. 86). Accordingly, 95.66% of 2022 BA graduates are employed.

Notwithstanding the information, the report does not expound more information on the job opportunities for students in each sub-programme, as a separate unit.

2.1.5.

N/A

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

The requirements for the compulsory part of the curriculum have been revised and implemented in line with Cabinet Regulation No 240 on National Academic Education Standards and the study course content has been updated to meet the demands of the market as reflected in many documents. The main aim of the BSP "Arts" is to provide higher education in the subject areas of art, as well as specialization in the sub-programmes of visual arts, visual plastic arts, design, audiovisual media arts or art history (with corresponding degrees acquired either Bachelor of Humanities in Design (43214) or Bachelor of Humanities in Audiovisual and Media Arts (43213) or Bachelor of Humanities in Visual Plastic Arts (43211). The tasks of the overarching programme are clear, such as, to provide fundamental understanding of the general features of visual art - 2D, 3D composition, to acquire the skills, techniques and methodologies of a specific artistic discipline, enabling professional, artistic, innovative or research activity. The implementation language is reasonable and justified since one of the cornerstones of AAL is fostering the Latvian AAL's research, creative-artistic and educational projects, promoting diverse cultural and artistic developments in the regions of Latvia, its Latgale branch. Another concern is the average dropout rate at 33 annually, amounting to 25% loss of a student body a year, which considering the cost to the state budget is not a small number. In addition not only is the Latgale branch low in enrollment, it has a vital role to play in fostering the economic activity in the region, not limited to the security of the State. In this regard, albeit notable in excellence, the Latgale branch is in need of additional funding to sustain and attract a new pool of artists to reside and work in the area.

Strengths:

- 1) Reputable programme with high performance and quality index nationally and internationally.
- 2) Excellent track record of research related performance.
- 3) The University offers Preparatory Courses for those in need to acquire or perfect their skills in order to pass the entry tests of their chosen department.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Relatively large dropout rate (at 25% annually in relation to enrollment)
- 2) Latgale branch has low student enrollment rate

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The Bachelor study programmes which comply with national regulations set by Latvian regulations and also matched with the EU Bologna Process, are divided in sub-programmes:

- Visual Arts sub-programme (Painting, Printmaking, Sculpture, specialisations);
- Visual Plastic Arts sub-programme (Textiles, Glass Art, Ceramics);
- Design (Product Design, Graphic Design, Interior Design, Fashion Design, Metal Design);
- Audio-visual Media Arts sub-programme (Visual Communication, Movement. Image. Sound, Environmental Art, Scenography);
- Art Science sub-programme (Art History and Theory, Restoration);
- The Art Academy of Latvia's Bachelor's program is implemented in the Latgale branch - in the specialities of painting, graphics, restoration and sculpture.

The content of the study programmes and their courses is clearly defined and designed according to the needs of the labor market, industry, culture area, and essential competencies that are needed in employment processes. The need of the market and the written competences are correlated (SAR, p. 91). The main objective of the Bachelor programme is to provide higher education in the arts subject areas, as well as specialisation in specific sub-programmes in the visual arts, visual plastic arts, design, audiovisual media arts or art history. The content of the study programme forms a unity of skills, knowledge and competences, which provide prerequisites for creative and research activity in the field of visual culture, using methods of artistic creativity and scientific research. For each sub-programme there is a compulsory and independent core of courses that students need to follow:

1. For the Visual Arts - painting, printmaking, sculpture. The main goal of this sub-programme is to provide a fundamental understanding of the general features of visual art - 2D, 3D composition, colour and graphic expression, the "language" of materials and to create a complete theoretical body of knowledge and critical understanding of the history of art and visual culture.
2. For the Visual Plastics Arts- textiles, ceramics, glass art. The main goal of this sub-programme is to provide knowledge of the general features of visual plastic art - colours, spatial volumes and graphic expression, 2D and 3D composition, as well as to develop a complete theoretical knowledge and critical understanding of the history of art and visual culture.
3. For Audio-Visual Media Arts - visual communication, scenography, Movement, Image, Sound, environmental art. The main goal of this sub-programme is to provide knowledge of the general features of audio-visual media art, colours, graphic expression and spatial solutions, 2D and 3D composition, technologies and their interaction, as well as to develop a complete theoretical body of knowledge and a critical understanding of the history of art and visual culture
4. For Design - product design, graphic design, interior design, fashion, metal design. The main goal of this sub-programme is to provide knowledge of the general features of design - 2D and 3D composition, design planning, spatial volume, colours, graphic expression and to develop a sound body of theoretical knowledge and a critical understanding of the history of art and visual culture

5. For Art Science - art history and theory, restoration. The main goal of this sub-programme is to provide fundamental knowledge and a complete theoretical body of knowledge in the history and theory of visual art, the general features of cultural heritage and current art, and to develop a critical understanding of art history and visual culture.

The content of the programmes has three parts: A- general education courses, B - industry study courses, C - limited optional study courses/free electives. Part C or specialization study courses/free electives are organized according to the module principle. There is a common mandatory study core for all sub programmes, which is organised in such a way as to ensure full mastery of the general principles of expression in the fields of art, knowledge and skills in drawing, painting and designing - the academic foundations of art, which provide prerequisites for research and creativity in the fields of art. The progression of the structure provides higher education in the arts subject areas, as well as specialisation in specific sub-programmes in the visual arts, visual plastic arts, design, audiovisual media arts or art history. The intended outcomes are derived directly from the specialisation of the art field in question - the specific nature of the creative work or research, the material or medium used in practice, the level of creativity and innovation.

There is constant involvement of employers in the improvement of the content of the study programmes, which contributes to the preparation of competitive labor market participants and ensuring the development of their professional competences. There is a strong interconnectivity among all study programmes which allows flexibility in students to pick up courses easily and without too many obstacles This is allowed because of the liberal approach to art and design thinking that permits and encourages interdisciplinary teaching and learning with cross-course as well as cross-programme involvement. This activity was well praised and supported by faculty, students and graduates during the site visit.

2.2.2.

N/A

2.2.3.

According to the SAR (p. 92) the evaluation of students' study results is carried out in accordance with the Art Academy of Latvia Regulations on Study Procedure at the Art Academy of Latvia (Issued in accordance with Section 5 (2), Section 15 (1) and Section 15' of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, last version approved by the Art Academy of Latvia Senate on 10.03.2023, Minutes No 21).

Every course document provides teaching methods and methods of assessing students' knowledge and skills. Teaching methods are student-centric and allow a strong student voice. During the site visit, it became evident to the team of experts the balance between theory and practice in the teaching methodology is very satisfactory. Faculty involve students in practical activities, dialogue, and group work. Most lectures are using traditional methods, such as reading theory, asking critical questions, showing examples, giving group or peer work.

The teaching methodology also involves teaching and learning through practice and exhibiting and this activity where both faculty and students are simultaneously involved is to be commended. Instruction and general educational methods are student-centric and allow a strong student bias.

2.2.4.

N/A

2.2.5.

N/A

2.2.6.

All topics of students' thesis that were presented to the team of experts during the site visit were found to be relevant to the fields and the academic domains of the AAL and fully correspond to the study programme. Final Thesis as documented in the SAR (p. 94) is a research-based creative work in the sub-programmes of Visual Art, Visual Plastic Art, Design, Audio-Visual Media Art and Art Science in the sub-programme of Restoration, or a research work in the sub-programme of Art

History and Theory. At the end of the studies, graduates of the Bachelor programme develop a diploma thesis on an individually selected topic related to the content focus of the sub-programmes and current issues of the specialisation. The practical performance of the theses can be seen annually in physical or digital form in the form of an exhibition. An overview of various thesis projects was also made possible through the Annex section of the e-platform. This list of students thesis (mainly the abstracts of the research work) is not however visible on the public website of the academy. Themes related to digital platform solutions, reflection of an inclusive society in artistic creativity, feminism, gender studies etc.

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

The students-centered paradigm is dominating in the study programmes construction, realization and development: faculty, students and alumni state positive opinions and also show that the programmes fulfill students and labor market needs.

Strengths:

- 1) Students are quite satisfied with teaching methods, balance of theory and practice.
- 2) Students are free to choose Topics of Final Thesis (paper) and discuss with lectures and practice place experts about its correlation with specialization and study programme.

Weaknesses:

None.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

N/A

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. There is adequate scientific support for the implementation of the study process (highly qualified specialists are involved in the provision of the study programme). For the implementation of the programme, there is sufficient information provision, it includes the available resources in the library. The material and technical provision for the implementation of the programme in Riga is excellent, which has been successfully improved, the Latgale branch needs to be improved. For example basic digital apps and tools, infrastructure is available for students to freely use, the same goes for artistic creation involved with physical materials, but if students want some more advanced or better quality materials, tools, they need to discuss the need with staff members or purchase the materials themselves. Same approach applies to the Latgale branch. Students there additionally require more attention from management, for example to come to Riga, be accommodated to visit exhibitions or guest lecturer events at the Riga. The connectivity of Latgale branch to the events held in Riga can be improved in terms of how often transportation and accommodation is provided for students and how it is being encouraged to use, because the students in Latgale branch should have the same opportunities as the BA students in Riga. For the implementation of the programmes, the financial security that creates the prerequisites for achieving the study results and indicates the

possibility of ensuring a high-quality study process is considered adequate. Albeit notable in excellence, is in need of additional funding to sustain and attract a new pool of artists to reside and work in the area, it needs a sustainable and strategically developed rapport with the local municipalities to offset the costs and benefits that seem to favor those studying in Riga, both in terms of acquiring more space/buildings for instructions and creative work.

2.3.2.

N/A

2.3.3.

Art study programmes are expensive, and due to the individual approach of pedagogues in practical study courses, study costs per student are high. The funding available for the bachelor's study programme is adequate, (According to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 994 of 12 December 2006 "Procedures for financing higher education institutions and colleges from state budget funds", the cost of one study place financed by the state budget is calculated by applying to the base cost the coefficients of the thematic area of education - in the thematic area of Arts 3.5 (optimal value) and 3.1 (minimum value) (SAR, page 96), but could be higher, giving the opportunity to cover the material costs of the study trial from the base funding. Analyzing the AAL data, the use of funding ensures the full implementation of the study process at the undergraduate level. The art study programme as a whole has an adequate number (602 students in year 2022) (SAR, page 7) of students (SAR, 3.1.2,3.1.3.), and taking into account the sub-programmes, it is balanced out to ensure the profitability of the study programme. 95.66% of 2022 BA graduates are employed (SAR, page 87). Considering the distance of the AAL Latgale branch from Riga, the costs of the programme are more expensive and affect AAL's opportunities to invest in the expansion of the infrastructure and space by improving more appropriate study conditions. Overall impressions about the available premises in the AAL are good, they are spacious and can foster the artistic creation process within the study process. AAL has not provided any viable information about how many students are needed to ensure viability of the study programme nor what is the study fee if the student decides to study in the programme without a state financed place. Such information also can not be found in the AAL webpage.

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

There is adequate scientific support for the implementation of the bachelor's level study process and there is sufficient provision of information, which also includes the resources available in the library. The material and technical support and infrastructure for the implementation of the programme can always be better, which the AAL Projects Department tries to implement by attracting the EU and other financial resources. AAL's existing resources and provision guarantee a quality content realization programme, ensuring its sustainability and development.

Strengths:

1) The AAL infrastructure, research and practical work spaces are organized at a good level.

Weaknesses:

1) AAL library is not fully open to students and there is no option to have access to library resources remotely.

2) The Latgale branch is underfunded in terms of infrastructure and space for creative work and artistic activities.

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

Based on SAR analysis and conversation's in Expert visit, compliance of the study provision, informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study program and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes is at a good level.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

It is evident from the data available in SAR that 24 professors, 25 associate professors, 44 assistant professors and 19 lecturers are involved in the implementation of the BA study programme. In the Latgale branch all employees have master's degrees except for one lecturer who has a doctorate, but is an external employee (employed outside the AAL). Very similar is the situation at other BA programmes. Most of them have an MA degree, in only one of the programmes two of the lecturers have currently a BA degree but are completing MA degree. In addition, in all programmes, individual lecturers with completed doctoral studies are involved in the implementation of the BA study programmes. From the interviews and reviewed documents of teaching staff resumes, it is clear that the majority of teaching staff are the AAL graduates. In addition, some lecturers are at the same time also students of the Professional doctoral study programme or master study programme. The latter (simultaneous study at the master's level) does not guarantee the necessary qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme at Bachelor's level. The Bylaws on the Academic Positions at ALL (internal regulative act) is a document which was adopted in March 2023 and defines criteria for individual academic positions. It clearly states the criteria according to which it is necessary to have completed a master's degree for all habilitation titles. Even for the position of the assistant or lecturer (article 5.7 and 5.8), a person who has not completed a master's programme cannot be elected. Given that there are no references to the rank assistant in the obtained documents (CVs), but they are in the Bylaws on the Academic Positions at AAL, experts suggest that the latter be harmonized for the sake of data transparency. Since the requirements and regulations at the AAL were adopted recently, it would be good to set a timeline within which the titles will be harmonized with the requirements and with general habilitation qualifications in higher education. From the reviewed CVs of the teaching staff (provided by AAL), it is evident that academic titles of the academic staff in the individual field of study programmes comply with the requirements set in Law on Higher Education Institutions (Chapter IV, Sections 27-38).

2.4.2.

With the aim of constantly renewing the teaching staff, AAL carefully involves young professionals in the pedagogical process. During the period in which the programme is being evaluated, the number of assistant professors increased (SAR, Study Programme Art, chapter 3.4.2). Despite the relatively high teaching load for all three academic positions (700 contact hours), to ensure a quality study process external hourly lecturers are included in the teaching process. The AAL reacted in a timely manner to the changes in the legal regulations that determine the proportion of doctoral degrees among the teaching staff. It is clear from the interviews that there would not be any obstacles in the study process and that the quality of it would not be compromised, the teaching staff with lower academic positions are also at the same time studying on a Professional doctoral programme at the

AAL. Regarding teaching staff mobility between Riga and the Latgale branch, experts found that the staff members from Riga can more often give lectures in the Branch, hence strengthening connection with the branch and providing students in the Latgale the same opportunities as in the capital.

2.4.3.

N/A

2.4.4.

There is no presentation of the teaching staff by study programmes or levels on the website. Therefore, there are no clear visible artistic achievements or research-based, scientific and professional publications that the teaching staff must fulfill under the requirements and for the purpose of higher educational teaching. However, it is evident from the attached documents of the employees' CVs that they fully follow the requirements of the artistic achievements, practical experience and/or published peer-reviewed editions (e.g. data for the period of last 6 years taken from one CV per individual sub-programme shows high number of solo and group exhibitions in Latvia and abroad, participation with lectures in conferences and professional publications). For better recognition of each member of the academic staff and transparency of data on the teaching staff, experts suggest that the AAL website contains a brief presentation of each member of academic staff and an indication of the most relevant achievements in the last six years (the data should be updated regularly). However, it is clear from the CVs of the teaching staff (provided by AAL) and onsite interviews that they meet requirements in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions (sections 28 - 32, sections 36-37). According to the Bylaws of the Academic Positions at the AAL the requirements of the teaching staff comply in ranking professors and associate professors as internationally recognised specialists in their subfields both, together with assistant professor (docent) pursue individually oriented creative work.

2.4.5.

It was emphasized in the interviews that they cooperate well vertically and horizontally according to the Bachelor's study programme. At the beginning of each academic year, they agree on the annual program of mutual cooperation and distribute the task within the departments. The teaching staff manages the projects autonomously. It was pointed out at the on-site visit that within the joint projects in which various sub-programmes participate, they stimulate the international participation of the students in competitions. Thus, with the results of such joint cooperation within the study programme, they have successfully participated in the Milan Design Week and the Red Dot competition several times. According to the experts, cooperation between teaching staff is sufficient, but limited more to project work.

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

This year, the AAL adopted a regulation on academic positions, which clearly defines the rules and procedures for academic promotion and is harmonized with national legislation. AAL follows legislative changes in the field of academic positions in a timely manner and coordinates the needs for quality implementation of the study programmes. AAL has established a functioning mechanism for extremely successful mutual cooperation on various projects. The teaching staff demonstrate very substantive and numerous professional activities outside of teaching load, thus ensuring the quality alignment of their achievements with the requirements for the academic positions.

Strengths:

- 1) Regular mutual cooperation between various sub-programmes and teaching staff on joint projects, some of whose results were also internationally recognized.
- 2) The teaching staff is strongly embedded in the local and regional professional environment and has extensive achievements in the fields of artistic creation.

Weaknesses:

- 1) There are no short presentations of the teaching staff on the AAL website. Listing the study programmes and courses they participate in, with accompanying short bio and listing the most notable artistic and research achievements.
- 2) In some cases of individual acquired academic titles of the teaching staff, the fulfillment of the requirements is not coordinated with the requirements for obtaining academic titles specified in the Bylaws on the Academic Positions at the AAL.
- 3) AAL Riga teaching staff could be more involved in the work at the AAL Latgale branch.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The qualifications of the academic staff are complied with the requirements specified in the AAL Bylaws on the Academic Positions and with the standards of national legislation and higher education recommendations. Minor corrections are recommended, but only on lower ranked academic positions.

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 has been evaluated in accordance with Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 240. Study programme is 8 semesters long, includes civil and environmental defense courses, and the Bachelor thesis takes up at least 10 CP. Experts would also recommend carefully review and describe in the AAL internal guidelines how the first article, paragraph 8 of Law on Higher Education Institutions will be applied to, determine CP amount. "Credit points are expressed in whole numbers. One credit point corresponds to 25-30 hours of study work." (See annex 6.)

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme is being implemented only in Latvian language. Study course descriptions are available in Latvian language and comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1 , Paragraph two and Section 56.2 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

AAL did not provide diploma examples for Bachelor level programme and each sub-programme, but the degree title is reflected in the SAR. Experts conclude that this is enough to ensure that the diploma issued by AAL is relevant to the legislation. AAL has provided only diploma supplements to the experts, which comply with the requirements set forth in Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 202.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Academy has provided a document stating that in the implementation of the Bachelor study programme in Riga and Latgale branch there are at least 5 professors involved in accordance with the Law of Higher Education Institutions. See Annex LMA_AIC.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

AAL has provided confirmation that teaching staff 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. See annex. LMA_AIC_valoda_ENG.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study agreement sample provided complies with the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 70. and are included in the agreement.

- 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: Partially compliant

The AAL has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in the academic Bachelor level study programme "Arts" in Latvian Academy of Culture if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. Annex. Ligums_studentu_parnemsana 2023_LMA_LKA. Since AAL provides study programme with following codes : 43211, 43213, 43214, but Academy of Culture only provides study programme with code 43212, students will not obtain exact the same qualification as they would in the AAL, this decreases overall evaluation as partially compliant.

- 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

The AAL 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 and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme. See Annex LMA_AIC_Zaudejumu_kompensacija

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

All regulatory requirements are met. Provided documents comply with the regulatory requirements. Additionally students do not have the exact same opportunity to continue their studies in case of a study programme not receiving accreditation.

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

Overall the requirements corresponding to the study programme at Bachelor level with all the

multiple sub-programmes, are fulfilled and these sub-programmes run with good structure and content, supported by a strong pool of academic staff, technicians, administration and physical resources in diverse areas from traditional wood and stone processes to high end technologies. In the opinion of the team of experts there are no any shortcomings needed to be addressed within 2 years. The empowerment of the Latgale branch may use some further implementation of the recommendations and suggestions provided in a more quick timeframe. The most important strengths of the Bachelor study programme and the sub-programmes are the passion and enthusiasm of both students and faculty to relate with each other as well as interact in cross-programme and cross-discipline activity and the dynamic community that has been built up in the academy.

Weaknesses to be considered relate to the formalization and rigorous implementation of the Quality Assurance system and process as well as the reinforced contextualization of the study programme formal document. The final consensus on the rating for this programme is Good since it is believed by the team of experts that there is room for improvement in all aspects.

Evaluation of the study programme "Art"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Art"

Short-term recommendations

- 1) In some cases of individual acquired academic titles of the teaching staff, the fulfillment of the requirements is not coordinated with the requirements for obtaining academic titles specified in the Bylaws on the Academic Positions at the AAL. Experts suggest that the academic titles lecturer and assistant be harmonized with The Bylaws on the Academic Positions at AAL.
- 2) It is recommended to have short presentations of the teaching staff on the web site, including the indications of the study programmes and courses in which they participate, with short curriculum vitae and indication of the most prominent artistic and research achievements in the last period of six years.
- 3) For the transparency of the study programme, it is necessary to publish abstracts of thesis work for public use on the website.
- 4) Ensure that Library materials are available to students also remotely.

Long-term recommendations

- 1) Students and teaching staff from the Latgale branch should be better included in international guest lectures and workshops held in Riga. A group of experts suggests regularly (at least once a year) organizing the participation (transportation and accommodation) of students and teaching staff at such events. The latter is coordinated with the management of the Latgale branch and the management of the ALL.
- 2) Focus more on the Marketing and advertising for Latgale Branch to increase enrollment rate in the Branch.
- 3) Expand the Latgale Branch infrastructure with additional and reinforced resources and materials, and financially support more the Branch.

4) Revise the enrollment criteria in the study programmes, to decrease dropout rate. Additionally, consider having more involved student tutors or mentors at the beginning of studies.

II - "Art" ASSESSMENT

II - "Art" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

MSP "Art" complies with the requirements for the compulsory part of the curriculum have been revised and implemented in line with Cabinet Regulation No 240 on National Academic Education Standards. According (SAR, p.154), the programme corresponds to the guidelines of the following: the Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy 2021-2027 (NAP2027); the Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (Latvia 2030); the Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022-2027 "Culture State"; the Educational Development Guidelines 2021-2027; the Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (Latvia 2030); the Educational Development Guidelines 2021-2027 (Latvia 2030); the Educational Policy Guidelines 2021-2027 (Latvia 2030). Guidelines for Science, Technology Development and Innovation 2021-2027; Guidelines for Digital Transformation 2021-2027; Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 Transforming Education and Training for the Digital Age; European Education Area Initiative; Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards a European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030); UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2027; UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy for Education and Training 2021-2027; UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy for Education and Training 2021-2027; UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy for Europe 2021-2027; UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy for Education and Training 2021-2027; UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy for Europe 2021-2030 (2021-2027). -2029; EU cultural policy initiative "A New Bauhaus for Europe"; Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "A European Universities Strategy"; Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective cooperation in European higher education.

During the on-site visit, the panel of experts has found the administrative structures that control the study process in the programme are somewhat complex and interfere with the smooth day to day operations. The responsibilities of the administrative staff are overlapping or are not entirely clear, as well as are in need of more clear responsibility divisions.

MSP "Art" fully corresponds to the study field "Arts". The title of the programme and the degree to be obtained, depending on a chosen field, Master of Humanities in Design (45214), Master of Humanities in Audiovisual and Media Arts (45213) or Master of Humanities in Visual Plastic Arts (45211), all of which fulfills the requirements of the programme in accordance with the Cabinet Regulations No 322 on the Classification of Latvian Education, according to the assigned codes.

The somewhat appealing, yet, curious was the addition of the new interdisciplinary specialization "POST", which seeks to capitalize on the transborder cultural, historical and geopolitical contexts and the artistic processes attached to them, yet, its appeal is not sufficiently marketed, nor is its essence efficiently formulated to the external sources.

The admission to MSP "Art" is carried out in accordance with Articles 45 and 46 of the Law on Higher Education, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 846 of 10 October 2006, and the programme features

a reputable staff whose artistic works and scientific achievements are recognized locally and internationally, while the employability index of the graduates is generally high. Somewhat concerning is the 25% dropout rate of attendees, considering the effect on the state budget and wasted resources, diminishing the dropout value should be attended to.

2.1.2.

The admission to MSP "Art" is carried out in accordance with Articles 45 and 46 of the Law on Higher Education, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 846 of 10 October 2006 "On Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study programs", and the Admission Rules approved by the Senate of the Art Academy of Latvia. The AAL determines the requirements for special aptitude entrance examinations in addition to those stipulated by the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Entrance examinations and admission to the Academy shall be conducted in an open and equal competition, in accordance with Articles 45 and 46 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Council of Ministers' Decision of 10.10.2006 on the establishment of the AAL (SAR, p.155). Because MSP "Art" (codes 45211, 45213, and 45214) is research-based, designed to create conditions for individually oriented research and artistic creativity in the fields of visual arts, audio-visual media arts, and design, art science, admission to the the programme is based on the assessment of the project application submitted by the applicant in accordance with the requirements of the chosen specialization, which are: Art, Visual and Plastic Arts, Audiovisual and Media Arts, and Art, Design, granting Master of Humanities in Design (Design sub-programme) (code 45214), Master of Humanities in Audiovisual and Media Arts (Audiovisual and Media Arts sub-programme) (code 45213), and Master of Humanities degree in Visual Plastic Arts (Visual arts, visual plastic and art history sub-programme) (code 45211).

The study programme is 80 credits (120 ECTS), full-time and in Latvian. The full-time, face-to-face format is defined in order to fulfill the programme requirements, which require the acquisition of certain practical skills. Upon graduation from the MSP "Art", Master of Humanities in Design, Master of Humanities in Audiovisual and Media Arts, or Master of Humanities in Visual Plastic Arts is awarded.

The duration and scope of the study programme implementation as well as the implementation language, are reasonable and justified, and the study programme's aim to develop students' critical thinking and the ability to objectively analyze both their own and others' work by fostering a creative process embedded in the broader context of historical and contemporary paradigms by internationally renowned professionals. It is matched to the learning outcomes, such as being able to acquire an in-depth or broadened knowledge and understanding, some of which corresponds to the latest findings in the relevant fields of art, design and art history and theory or being able to independently direct the development and specialization of own competences, to name a few (SAR, pp.151-156).

While Master's thesis project include a problem statement, a justification of the topicality of the topic, and a list of the methods and techniques envisaged in creation the practical part (SAR, p.156), the write-up portion often resemble production notes or an artistic statement, rather than in a through evidence of a scientific methodology used, i.e., the scientific novelty in written part are sacrificed to the artistic work itself.

2.1.3.

The total period since the previous accreditation is 10 years, during which the study content has been regularly reviewed and updated in accordance with the contemporary trends in the fields of visual arts, design and audio-visual media arts, taking into account the latest developments in theoretical and practical knowledge - the study course content has been updated and individual study courses have been introduced in response to the Latvian National Development Plan 2021. The Art Academy of Latvia offers the academic MSP "Art" (45211, 45213, 45214) in Riga. Duration of the programme: 2 years of full-time studies. The Master's programme originally was accredited on 24 May 2013 for 6 years - until 31 December 2019 (Accreditation Commission Decision No 33 of

24.05.2013), afterwards accreditation was extended until 31 December 2023.

2.1.4.

The focus of AAL is centered on students' excellence. The studies are planned by assessing student needs, socio-economic impact, graduate employability and technological developments, and content is dynamically updated, and students have access to the necessary infrastructure, digital tools and skills, opportunities for mobility, specialization and involvement in international cooperation.

Graduate employment contributes to the development of general and vocational education, to the realization of experience and skills within the framework of unique artistic creativity, representing the image of Latvia locally and internationally, while the programme implements the Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022-2027 "The State of Culture", including and analyzing the current situation and global trends in the field of cultural employment.

The economic and social rationale for the study programme is determined by the analysis of the graduate employment survey, indicating the areas of the labor market where graduates are employable and contribute to the overall cultural and creative industries sector. The most important forms of employment in the reporting period: employee (64.14%), entrepreneur (10.69%), self-employed (32.07%) (SAR, pp.155-156).

The quality of work produced does not leave any doubt as the high rate of employability for the graduate students within the sectors of Education, Science, Media, Public Relations Services, Real Estate, Information Technology and Telecommunications, Design Offices and Advertising Industry, Government and Non-Governmental Cultural Institutions, etc.

The enrollment dynamics of the students in all majors is somewhat steady, roughly 19 students per major, with a scant fluctuation, but a noticeable dropout rate, thus, for instance, according to Annex 5, 96 students were enrolled in 2020, if one assumes they all graduated in 2022, then only 71 did, which is a loss of 25%, not entirely small percentage.

2.1.5.

N/A

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

MSP "Art" fully corresponds to the study field "Arts". The title of the programme and the degree to be obtained - 45214 - Master of Humanities in Design, for the sub-programme coded 45213 - Master of Humanities in Audiovisual and Media Arts, for the sub-programme coded 45211 - Master of Humanities in Visual Plastic Arts - fulfill the requirements of the programme in accordance with the Cabinet Regulations No 322 on the Classification of Latvian Education, according to the assigned codes.

The admission to MSP "Art" is carried out in accordance with Articles 45 and 46 of the Law on Higher Education, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 846 of 10 October 2006. The study programme is 80 CP (120 ECTS), full-time and in Latvian. The face-to-face format is defined in order to fulfill the programme requirements, which require the acquisition of certain practical skills. The programme features reputable staff whose artistic works and scientific achievements are recognized locally and internationally. The economic and social rationale for the study programme is determined by the analysis of the graduate employment survey; graduate employment contributes to the development of general and vocational education, to the realization of experience and skills within the framework of a unique artistic creativity, and the employability index is generally high.

Strengths:

- 1) MSP "Art" features reputable staff whose works are recognized locally and internationally.
- 2) MSP "Art" features highly appealing content in its curriculum that is regularly updated in line with the industry needs.

3) Graduates have a high index of employability that attests to the professional acumen of the programme.

Weaknesses:

1) Organizational structures that control the study process are somewhat complex and interfere with the smooth day to day operations.

2) The responsibilities of the administrative staff are overlapping and/or are not entirely clear, and not sufficiently separated.

3) Some majors such as "POST" are not sufficiently marketed and their essence is not efficiently formulated.

4) The write up portion of the Master thesis at times is not scientifically rigorous.

5) Somewhat considerable drop-out rate at 25%.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The organizational and study process structures are somewhat confusing and need to be reassessed in the programme. For instance, the specialization "POST", a rather cutting edge approach, is not listed in the parameter chapter. Also with respect to the learning outcomes, the response from the student body was that the programme might benefit from more business related courses, as some had argued they were not quite prepared to navigate the complex business side of the arts market right after graduation. According to the evidence on the SAR (p. 159) in the process of studying the Academic Master's study programme "Arts" the student acquires in-depth theoretical knowledge, research and artistic creativity skills and abilities in the chosen branch, sub-program and speciality of humanities, achieving a professional level of knowledge, skills and competence in the mentioned areas. The content of the study programme and their courses is clearly defined and designed according to the needs of the labor market, industry, culture area, and essential competencies that are needed in employment processes. The need of the market and the written competences are correlated (SAR, p. 160). The content of the programme has three parts: A - general education courses, B - industry study courses, C - limited optional study courses/free electives. Part C or specialization study courses/free electives are organized according to the module principle. There is constant involvement of employers in the improvement of the content of the study programme, which contributes to the preparation of competitive labor market participants and ensuring the development of their professional competences. Instruction and general educational methods are student-centric and allow a strong student bias. There is a strong interconnectivity among all sub-programs which allows flexibility in students to pick up courses easily and without too many obstacles.

The Master Study programme complies with national regulations as this is made clear in the SAR (p. 158) being in accordance with the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. 240 "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education", approved on 13th May 2014.

2.2.2.

The awarding of the MA degree is fully based on the achievements and findings of the chosen topics by the students. The MSP study programme relies on research-based activity with the main goal to promote scientific research or artistic creation. The main task of the Master's programme is to facilitate the development of the Master's thesis, providing students with opportunities to develop a Master's thesis on a permanent and sustainable basis, to acquire new theoretical knowledge, to independently research and practically test new forms of expression, to develop the ability to theoretically justify the creative process, to conduct scientific research, to develop communication skills and to prepare graduates for independent professional activity.

During the site visit it also became evident that the whole student community from all 3 levels of

education in the AAL enjoy a cross-program and cross-level teaching and learning experience by bringing all students together in debates, seminars, workshops and exhibitions. Further support to the MSP study programmes is provided by the AAL's research institutes.

2.2.3.

According to the SAR (p. 162) the evaluation of students' study results is carried out in accordance with the Art Academy of Latvia Regulations on Study Procedure at the Art Academy of Latvia (Issued in accordance with Section 5 (2), Section 15 (1) and Section 15' of the Higher Education Law, last version approved by the Art Academy of Latvia Senate on 10.03.2023, Minutes No 21). Every course document provides teaching methods and methods of assessing students' knowledge and skills. Teaching methods are student-centric and allow a strong student voice. During the site visit, it became evident to the team of experts the balance between theory and practice in the teaching methodology is very satisfactory. Faculty involve students in practical activities, dialogue, and group work. Most lectures are using traditional methods, such as reading theory, asking critical questions, showing examples, giving group or peer work. The teaching methodology also involves teaching and learning through practice and exhibiting and this activity where both faculty and students are simultaneously involved is to be commended. Additional commendation is also made to the sub-programme "POST", which utilizes a very contemporary approach towards scientific research and artistic production and which also uses synergies with various International institutions towards the better teaching and learning strategy of its students. The team of experts felt that "POST" can be a good example as well as the basis for a good comparison throughout the AAL.

2.2.4.

N/A

2.2.5.

N/A

2.2.6.

All topics of students' thesis that were presented to the team of experts during the site visit were found to be relevant to the fields and the academic domains of the AAL and fully corresponded to the study programme. Final Thesis as documented in the SAR (p. 164) is a research-based creative work in the sub-programmes of Visual Art, Visual Plastic Art, Design, Audio-Visual Media Art and Art Science in the sub-program of Restoration, or a research work in the sub-programme of Art History and Theory.

At the end of the studies, graduates of the Master programme develop a diploma thesis on an individually selected topic related to the content focus of the sub-programmes and current issues of the specialisation. The practical performance of the theses can be seen annually in physical or digital form in the form of an exhibition. An overview of various theses projects was also made possible through the Annex section of the e platform. Themes related to digital platform solutions, reflection of an inclusive society in artistic creativity, feminism, gender studies etc.

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

The students-centered paradigm is dominating in the study programme construction, realization and development: faculty, students and alumni state positive opinions and also show that the programmes fulfill students and labor market needs. The structure of the study programme is well thought out and follows a sequential and progressional order, contributing to the achievement of the study programme's learning outcomes. The synergies among the various sub-programmes are strong and also contribute to the enhancement of the students teaching and learning experience.

The content of the study programme is topical, the content of the study courses are interconnected and complementary, corresponds to the objectives of the programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes, as well as meets the needs of the industry. The Master programme complies with national regulations. The awarding of a degree is based on the achievements and findings of

the relevant field of science or artistic creation. The MA programme utilizes student-centred learning and teaching principles, and the topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme.

Strengths:

- 1) Students are quite satisfied with teaching methods, balance of theory and practice.
- 2) Students are free to choose Topics of Final Thesis (paper) and discuss with lectures and practice place experts about its correlation with specialization and study programme.
- 3) Faculty and students' passion and enthusiasm to relate with each other as well as interact in cross-programme and cross-discipline activity and the dynamic community that has been built up in the academy.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The formalization and rigorous implementation of the Quality Assurance system.
- 2) The reinforced contextualization of the study programme formal document.

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: Fully compliant

Being a research-based programme, students on this programme work on analysis, hypotheses, experimentation and implementation of research findings and contribute to new knowledge in the respective academic field and artistic creation.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

There is adequate scientific support for the implementation of the study process at the Master of Arts level (highly qualified specialists are involved in providing the study programme - academic staff 136, including 25 professors and 26 associate professors - SAR, page 168). There is sufficient provision of information for the implementation of the programme, which includes the resources available in the library and the support mechanism of the research institutes. Students can access these resources on the Academy premises. The material and technical support for the implementation of the programme is adequate (SAR, pages 165-166). All the rooms, premises, machines, materials etc. are also available for students to meet study course requirements in their speciality. During the site visit experts saw sewing machines, sculpting laboratories, painting and drawing rooms, the modernised POST premises etc. Financial security is considered appropriate for the implementation of the programme, which creates prerequisites for achieving study results and indicates the possibility of ensuring a high-quality study process and, after graduation, successful integration of graduates into the labor market in Latvia and elsewhere. During the site interviews none of the parties displayed worries about financial aspects to ensure the study process.

2.3.2.

N/A

2.3.3.

The Master of Arts study programme is expensive (SAR, page 167) and the study costs per student

are high, if they should be covered by students paying for the study programme taking into account the overall economic situation, especially for students who come from the regions. The funding available for the Master of Arts study programme is adequate, but could be higher, giving the opportunity to cover the material costs (in the Experts meeting with students, students mentioned, as materials buy for self) of the study process from the base funding. Analyzing the AAL data, the use of funding ensures the full implementation of the study process at the master's level. The Master of Arts study programme generally has an appropriate number of students (in year 2022 - 270 students, SAR, page 7) and, taking into account the sub-programmes, it is balanced to ensure the profitability of the study programme.

In 2022, the budget of the Academy consisted of the state funding of the study base (EUR 4 698 097), the funding of the science base and performance (EUR 576 746), the funding of research projects (EUR 248 990), the funding of education projects (EUR 603 082), the funding of development projects (EUR 230 408), the funding of the MC and the State Culture Capital Fund (EUR 365 893), the income from tuition fees (EUR 179 458), the income from services and rent of premises (EUR 288 193), as well as donations (EUR 3 557). In accordance with the rules, the costs of the Master's programme are calculated each year from the allocation of the State-funded study places, providing EUR 1 607 941 for the cost of the basic study places and EUR 50 976 for the social security costs of the study places (SAR, page 167).

In the expert visit time was found, AAL library should review cooperation with AAL institutes and communication with students and teachers, and evaluate the purchase of art books and periodicals for better cooperation in the future (for example, in the libraries are not AAL institute research materials, books).

By ensuring the availability of master's studies in the region and the continuity of studies, as realized with the Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations" in Kuldīga, the possibility of implementing the master's program in the Latgale branch could be analyzed in the future.

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

There is adequate scientific support for the implementation of the study process at the Master of Arts level. Material and technical provision and infrastructure for the implementation of the programme can always be better, which the AAL project department is trying to implement by attracting EU and other financial resources. The Master of Arts study programme generally has an appropriate number of students and, taking into account the sub-programmes, it is balanced to ensure the profitability of the study programme. AAL's existing resources and provision guarantee a high-quality content realization program, ensuring its sustainability and development, which is essential for the Latvian economy.

Strengths:

- 1) LAA's infrastructure, research and practical work spaces are organized at a good level.
- 2) There is sufficient material and technical base, tools and specific equipment to ensure the study process.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The AAL library should review cooperation with AAL institutes and communication with students and teachers, and evaluate the purchase of grammars and periodicals for better cooperation in the future.

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

Resources and Provision for the master's degree study level is excellent. Premises are well suited for the students to achieve study programme learning outcomes. Available resources ensure study process continuity and development.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

The programme features reputable staff whose artistic works and scientific achievements are recognized locally and internationally, hence, helping students to be tied to the creative industries directly. This also helps in obtaining professional qualifications necessary for successful work in creative industries. According to the SAR, the implementation of the Master's study programme involves 21 professors, 16 associate professors, 36 assistant professors and 13 lecturers. From the interviews and reviewed documents of teaching staff resumes, it is clear that the majority of teaching staff are AAL graduates. In addition, some lecturers are also at the same time students of the Professional doctoral study programme. The AAL Regulations on Academic Positions is a document which was adopted in March 2023 and defines criteria for individual academic positions. From the reviewed CVs of the teaching staff, it is evident that they meet the requirements of artistic activity and professional experience in the individual field of study programmes. The CV documents show excellence in further academic education, international cooperation, substantive research work and innovative artistic activity of the teaching staff in various study programmes and sub-programmes.

2.4.2.

With the aim of constantly renewing the teaching staff, AAL carefully involves young professionals in the pedagogical process. During the period in which the programme is being evaluated, the number of assistant professors increased (SAR, Study programmes for the Accreditation, 3.4.2). Despite the relatively high teaching load for all three academic positions (700 contact hours), to ensure a quality study process external hourly lecturers are included in the teaching process. The AAL reacted in a timely manner to the changes in the legal regulations that determine the proportion of doctoral degrees among the teaching staff. It is clear from the interviews that there would not be any obstacles in the study process and that the quality of it would not be compromised, the teaching staff with lower academic positions are also at the same time studying on a Professional doctoral programme at the AAL.

2.4.3.

N/A

2.4.4.

There is no presentation of the teaching staff by study programmes or levels on the website. Therefore, there are no clear visible artistic achievements or research-based, scientific and professional publications that the teaching staff must fulfill under the requirements and for the purpose of higher educational teaching. However, it is evident from the attached documents of the employees' CVs in the SAR that they fully follow the requirements of the artistic achievements, practical experience and/or published peer-reviewed editions. From the data available the academic staff participate abroad and in Latvia in the last 6 years period in international conferences and seminars, have solo exhibitions and participate in group exhibitions, participate in international

contests, be jury members for international competitions, publish scientific research papers, curatorial work, participate in research works. The number of individual activities depends on the subfield that the individual teaching staff deals with. However, a review of the CVs that have been submitted shows that the professional achievements meet the conditions of having exhibitions, working in their professional fields and/or publishing in peer reviewed journals or publications in the past six years. For better recognition of each member of the academic staff and transparency of data on the teaching staff, experts suggest that the AAL website contains a brief presentation of each member of academic staff and an indication of the most relevant achievements in the last period. But data in CV documents of the teaching staff shows that high profile publishing and exhibiting achievements are evident in each document. Experts can highlight the teaching staff of the POST sub-programme. From the reviewed data, it can be seen that, in addition to regular annual solo and group exhibitions, they also participate in professional symposiums and conferences, are experts in commissions and juries and being part of the research projects (e.g. 'Cultures and Identities in Latvia: Heritage and Contemporary Practice', 2014-2017). So that they even exceed the requirements specified in the AAL regulations and could be therefore a good example to follow throughout the AAL.

2.4.5.

It was emphasized in the interviews that teaching staff cooperates well vertically and horizontally according to the Master's study programme. At the beginning of each academic year, they agree on the annual program of mutual cooperation and distribute the task within the departments. The teaching staff manages the projects autonomously. It was pointed out at the on-site visit that within the joint projects in which various sub-programmes participate, they stimulate the international participation of the students in competitions and also international cooperation with institutions that match the aims of the study programme (POST). Thus, with the results of such joint cooperation within the study programme, they have successfully participated in the various competitions and exhibitions several times.

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

This year, the AAL adopted a regulation on academic positions, which clearly defines the rules and procedures for academic promotion and is harmonized with national legislation. AAL follows legislative changes in the field of academic positions in a timely manner and coordinates the needs for quality implementation of the study programmes. They have established a functioning mechanism for extremely successful mutual cooperation on various projects. The teaching staff demonstrate very substantive and numerous professional activities outside of teaching load, thus ensuring the quality alignment of their achievements with the requirements for the academic positions and therefore ensures the interconnections of study courses within study programmes and sub-programmes.

Strengths:

1) The teaching staff is strongly embedded in the local, regional and international professional environment and has extensive achievements in the fields of artistic creation and also research work.

Weaknesses:

1) There are no short presentations of the teaching staff on the AAL website. Listing the study programmes and courses they participate in, with accompanying short bio and listing the most notable artistic and research achievements.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The qualifications of the academic staff are complied with the requirements specified in the AAL Bylaws on the Academic Positions and with the standards of national legislation and recommendations for higher education.

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 has been evaluated in accordance with Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 240. Study programme is 4 semesters long, covers Civil and Environmental defense study courses in case the student did not undergo this course at BA level. Master thesis work consists at least of 20 CP. Experts would also recommend carefully review and describe in the LAA internal guidelines how the first article, paragraph 8 of Law on Higher Education Institutions will be applied to, determine CP amount. "Credit points are expressed in whole numbers. One credit point corresponds to 25-30 hours of study work." (See annex 6.).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme is being implemented only in Latvian language. Study course descriptions are available in Latvian language and comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1 , Paragraph two and Section 56.2 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 202 for issuing Higher education diplomas.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Academy has provided a document stating that in the implementation of the Master study programme there are at least 5 professors involved in accordance with the Law of Higher Education Institutions. See Annex LMA_AIC.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

AAL has provided confirmation that teaching staff 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. See annex. LMA_AIC_valoda_ENG.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study agreement sample provided complies with the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 70. and are included in the agreement.

- 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: Partially compliant

The AAL has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in the academic Master level study programme "Arts" in Latvian Academy of Culture if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. Annex. Ligums_studentu_parnemsana_2023_LMA_LKA. Since AAL provides study programme with following codes : 45211, 45213, 45214, but Academy of Culture only provides study programme with code 45212,

students will not obtain exact the same qualification as they would in the AAL, this decreases overall evaluation as partially compliant.

- 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

The AAL has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study program's license is revoked and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme. See Annex LMA_AIC_Zaudejumu_kompensacija

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Study programme meets all regulatory requirements Diploma issued, study programme contents and other annexes comply with law, except the opportunity to continue studies in other HEI. Agreement states that students will be provided an opportunity to continue their studies in study programme with different code, meaning they will not be able to obtain the same qualification as in AAL.

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

Overall the requirements corresponding to Academic Master study programmes with sub-programmes are fulfilled and these study programmes with sub-programmes run with good structure and content, supported by a strong pool of academic staff, technicians, administration and physical resources in diverse areas from traditional wood and stone processes to high end technologies. In the opinion of the team of experts there are no any shortcomings needed to be addressed within 2 years.

The most important strengths of the Master study programme and the sub-programmes are the passion and enthusiasm of both students and faculty to relate with each other as well as interact in cross-programme and cross-discipline activity and the dynamic community that has been built up in the academy.

Weaknesses to be considered relate to the formalization and rigorous implementation of the Quality Assurance system and process as well as the reinforced contextualization of the study programme formal document.

The final consensus on the rating for this programme is Good since it is believed by the team of

experts that there is room for improvement in all aspects.

Evaluation of the study programme "Art"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Art"

Short-term recommendations

- 1) On the website, a short presentation with the most representative publications and exhibitions or other relevant information regarding the scientific, research and/or artistic achievements should be made for each individual lecturer. It is necessary to add in which subjects, including the level of study, she/he participates in.
- 2) Advertise more edge cutting sub-programmes like POST to raise interest in Master level studies and attract more students.
- 3) Create a more strict hierarchy within the academy, for example to decrease the amount of job titles - director. Otherwise experts had the feeling that everybody is a director of some unit, such approach undermines subordination principles.

Long-term recommendations

- 1) To intensify the need of the rigorous implementation for the QA system
- 2) To reinforce the contextualization of the study programme formal document including the Self Assessment Report.
- 3) Create more distinct administrative role job descriptions, to minimize potential role overlapping and make the administrative staff duties more clear.
- 4) Create more strict and detailed Master thesis requirements for students, since these are academic study programmes, they need to include larger research based part.
- 5) Create student support system with attentive supervision and/or revise enrollment criteria for the programme, to decrease student drop out rates.
- 6) Create a formalised internal system where all the parties, including scientific institutes, students, staff members can communicate and decide/suggest to purchase grammars, periodicals. Additionally make sure that library resources are available online.

II - "Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations"" ASSESSMENT

II - "Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations"" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

According to (SAR p.214-215), because the strategic course of the Art Academy of Latvia is to provide higher education in art, design, theory and history of art and culture with emphasis on research and creative-artistic activity in order to contribute to the activities of creative industries and socio-economic development of Latvian society and national economy, the Joint Master's Academic Study Programme (hereinafter JMSP) "Service Design Strategies and Innovations" fits within the framework of the study field "Arts" as well as its strategic trajectory that offers bachelor, master level, and doctoral study programs in visual plastic arts, audio visual media arts, design, and in art science. In addition, the programme is built on the trends in service design and the service design practice to foster the innovations in institutions and organizations of the service sector. As such, the programme is compiled with the study field and is reflected in its title to be the Joint Academic Master's Study programme "Service Design Strategies and Innovation".

The Compliance of the joint full-time Master's academic study programme "Service Design Strategies and Innovations" with the requirements set for the joint study programme (Section 55.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions) have been clarified in Annex 4.1. While the learning outcomes, aims, and objectives are interrelated in order to advance the development of service design studios catering the Nordic markets and beyond, the program is still fairly fresh within the organizations of the service sector. Notwithstanding the program corresponds to the study field with the volume is 80 CP (120 ECTS) in 2 year duration, but its title of the degree and diploma need to be corrected to match (the Cabinet Regulation N.322) (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju>) regulations in offering Master of Humanities in Design as regulated by the Law.

Due to Erasmus Mundus programme funding the programme is accessible to countries with lower average incomes and now features a wide array of countries where the students come from. Yet, the tuition and fees are relatively high, and not all students can receive the funding. The JMSP "Service design strategies and innovation" is in a unique position to advance the cross border cooperation near abroad, but marketing activities for the programme and to incentivize the locations for prospective students should be enhanced. With respect to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area as well as the internal regulatory enactments of each partner university, the students are involved in the evaluation of the study process itself, providing a feedback loop that enhances the competences of a Lead Service Designer

2.1.2.

The title, code, degree to be obtained of the study programme (to be corrected; see below), aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated since the main objective of the programme is foster the development of service design studios catering the economic growth needs of culture, society, and the Baltic States by enhancing design thinking, creativity, and service design practice by means of educating the professionals to be the Lead Service Designer who possess the knowledge, skills and competences needed for the strategic development of services and the introduction of innovations in institutions and organizations of the service sector.

The objective, tasks and planned achievable results in the programme are formulated in accordance with the most important national development planning documents - the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030, the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2027, the Education Development Guidelines of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Latvia for 2014-2020, as well as the aims and objectives set out in the Design Strategy of Latvia 2020 (SAR, p.216). Furthermore, the study programme's code according to the Classification of Education in Latvia is 45214 (design) and the degree to be awarded - according to (SAR, p. 213) Master of Design degree in the Humanities in Design (while the diploma sample says "Master of Design Degree in the Humanities), which corresponds to the study programme content and parameters, with the volume is 80 CP (120 ECTS) of 2 year duration. The issue, however, is that the Issuing Diploma and the degree title are incoherent and legally incorrect. According to (Cabinet Regulation N.322) (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju>), the Degree should be

Master of Humanities in Design. The university should make an effort to clarify the discrepancy and correct it when required.

The admission requirements are in line with its English instructional model the required admission procedures at least 120 CP (180 ECTS) in second-level professional higher education in Humanities, Arts, Information and Communication Sciences, Social and Human Sciences or Business and Administration as well as the English language proficiency TOEFL, IELTS, ELS (etc.) or acquired previous education in a study program implemented in English. Because one of the study programme's primary objectives is to educate top-tier service designer specialists by offering an English-based curriculum (SAR, p.211) such an approach enhances opportunities in the international market.

JMSP "Service design strategies and innovation" exhibits a very coherent and logical administrative structure that makes the study process user friendly, and it may serve as a model for the Academy's other programmes.

2.1.3.

With respect to the JMSP's parameters, on 29 July 2022, AAL received approval from the European Commission and in September 2022 signed an agreement with the European Education and Culture Executive Agency EACEA, the study programme "Service Design Strategies and Innovation" (SDSI) becoming the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's level study programme (Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters - EMJM), project No. 101082388. Because the condition of Erasmus Mundus study programs is to ensure international mobility and study volume of at least 30 ECTS (semester) for students in 2 countries, which are different from the countries of citizenship of the students, a 2023 amendment to the consortium agreement was signed, making the associate partner, the Estonian Academy of Arts, and introducing Estonia as a mobility country for the SDSI program in order to make SDSI eligible for Erasmus Mundus programs (SAR, p.214). As a result, Estonia becomes a one-semester study location for all SDSI students, where they spend the first year of their studies - the first and second semesters at the Art Academy of Latvia and Riga Stockholm School of Economics, followed by a third semester in Finland, at the University of Lapland, or in Estonia, at the Estonian Academy of Arts, with student groups split in half in the 4th semester, changing mobility locations - those who spent the 3rd semester in Finland go on mobility to Estonia and vice versa.

2.1.4.

The study programme was licensed on 19 May 2021. Owing to the Erasmus Mundus programme status and available scholarships, the study programme has become accessible to countries with lower average incomes. While initially, within the period from 2021 to 2023, the programme was only fee-based, the number of incoming students was lower, with the majority coming from Latvia, Finland, Taiwan, Singapore, Algeria, Colombia, and Ukraine (SAR, p.215). But by the 2023/2024 academic year, SDSI scope had increased as the programme accepted students from various countries, including Poland, Egypt, Mexico, Italy, Kosovo, Portugal, Latvia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Germany, Ireland, Turkey, Hungary, Finland, Romania, Thailand, India, Venezuela, China, Estonia, Vietnam, Iceland, Peru, and the United States.

Tuition fees in the first two years were also relatively high - EUR 8,000 per year. In the first year, 4 students were withdrawn, 2 of them were withdrawn due to non-fulfilment of financial obligations, and the other two were withdrawn at their own will, as they could not combine full-time studies with work (SAR, p.219).

Once the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's study programme (EMJM), project No. 101082388 was adopted, and having received co-funding from the European Commission (EC), there is an expectation from the study administration that they might get Erasmus Mundus scholarships of 1,400 EUR/month and free tuition for the next 5 years, while the European residents will receive a 50% tuition fee reduction (SAR, p.219).

While the economic forecasts in Latvia and in the European Union are hard to predict in light of the Ukraine war the European economy will continue to transform in the direction of services, the

number of employees in this sector will continue to grow and the greatest potential is expected for the development of the service sector (ESPAS – European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (2015). Global Trends to 2030: Can the EU meet the challenges ahead?; https://espas.eu/files/espas_files/about/espas-report-2015.pdf), with the service sector expanding those member states that joined the EU relatively recently, including Latvia. On that note, a report on the medium- and long-term labor market projections (https://www.em.gov.lv/lv/videja-un-ilgtermina-darba-tirgus-prognozes/emzino_06072018_full1.pdf/emzino_06072018_full1.pdf), indicates that the service sectors will ensure the overall increase in the number of employees in 2025 as well, despite the trends of automation and population aging.

Finally, and most importantly, JMSP “Service design strategies and innovation” appears to be a milestone in sustaining the cultural identity and economic activity across near borders. In view that the highly centralized states of medium to small size are prone to structural and security concerns, the cross border cooperation near abroad, where education plays a large role, is vital to the national economic sustainability, and by proxy, military as well. As such marketing activities for the programme and to incentivize the locations for prospective students should have a more prominent role in the public discourse within the international framework, particularly in view that some students must cover costly fees. While the programme comprises a very eclectic student body from many different countries, with 33 enrolled in 2023/2024 academic year alone, 14 of them were not on scholarship.

Another aspect is the low number of elected staff in the programme, as many instructors appear not to have full-time contracts with the educational base but conduct their main professional and scholastic work outside the respective universities.

2.1.5.

According to the service design ecosystem map created by the Service Design Network (<https://www.service-design-network.org/>), service design comprises four main knowledge areas—design, social research, technology and entrepreneurship—and the Nordic universities have a strong track record and reputation for delivering service design degree programs as well as a relatively geographically “close” region, facilitate student mobility. Thus, according to (SAR, pp. 220-221), the main objective of the selection of partner universities was therefore to ensure the consortium's competence in the aforementioned 4 areas of competence. The second reason for creating the joint study programme was to consider the future of the programme – to design the content structure and mobility periods of the programme in such a way that the programme would qualify for the European Commission’s Erasmus Mundus project competition in the future, which requires the participation of at least 2 partner universities, with each willing to host students for at least 1 semester 20 CP (30 ECTS).

With respect to The University of Lapland with its Arctic Art and Design Laboratories (ARCTA), hosted by the Faculty of Art and Design, especially the Service Innovation Environment (SINCO), the choice reflected an opportunity to improve not only the quality of services, but also the expertise of service providers in close cooperation with local, national and international companies and the public sector; with respect to the Estonian Academy of Arts with its new Interaction Design study programme the choice hinged on technological user experiences, and sustainable service design.

Finally, the 29-year-old Riga Stockholm School of Economics provides the instructional quality in business strategies, supported by several academic and non-academic facilities and services to students including a library and sports facilities, deemed to be of a reputable quality, hence, the Latvian students are particularly in a favorable position as opposed to those in University of Lapland, or the Estonian Academy of Arts.

With respect to the quality insurance of study process within the programme, the process is lined up with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area as well as the internal regulatory enactments of each partner university, defined in the consortium agreement (SAT, p.225), but, on a practical level, it means the students are involved in the

evaluation of the study process itself, providing a feedback to further the structure of the curriculum that enhances the competences of a Lead Service Designer, not limited to monitoring performance of the staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme, course evaluation surveys, annual audits and surveys. As an example, upon the inception of the JMSP, the Latvian students were not particularly satisfied with the quality of studies at Lapland, but after having enacted the monitoring and evaluation options cited previously, the course content offered in Finland has significantly improved.

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

The JMSP “Service design strategies and innovation” complies with the study field, whereby its aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. The objective, tasks and planned achievable results in the programme are formulated in accordance with the most important national development planning documents. The admission requirements are in line with its English instructional model with at least 120 CP (180 ECTS) in second-level professional higher education in Humanities, Arts, Information and Communication Sciences, Social and Human Sciences or Business and Administration as well as the English language proficiency. The selection of partners has focused on four main knowledge areas- design, social research, technology and entrepreneurship—the study process that provides the content structure and mobility periods of the programme in such a way that the programme deems to offer a good mobility for students. With respect to The University of Lapland with its Arctic Art and Design Laboratories (ARCTA), hosted by the Faculty of Art and Design, especially the Service Innovation Environment (SINCO), the choice reflected an opportunity to improve not only the quality of services, but, with respect to the Estonian Academy of Arts with its new Interaction Design study programme, the choice hinged on technological user experiences, and and sustainable service design. Because one the study programme's primary objectives is to educate top-tier service designer specialists by offering an English-based curriculum (SAR, p.211) such an approach enhances opportunities in the international market.

While the economic forecasts in Latvia and in the European Union are hard to predict in light of the Ukraine war the European economy will continue to transform in the direction of services, the number of employees in this sector will continue to grow and the greatest potential is expected for the development of the service sector.

Finally, and most importantly, JMSP “Service design strategies and innovation” appears to be a cornerstone in reviving the cultural identity and economic activity of the Latgale region. In view that the highly centralized states of medium to small size are prone to structural and security concerns, the decentralized system, where education plays a large role, is vital to the national economic sustainability, and by proxy, military as well.

The Compliance of the joint full-time Master’s academic study programme “Service Design Strategies and Innovations” with the requirements set for the joint study programme (Section 55.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions) have been clarified in Annex 4.1.

Strengths:

- 1) JMSP “Service design strategies and innovation” exhibits a very coherent and logical administrative structure.
- 2) The consortium exhibits a sound choice of partners to ensure the design, social research, technology and entrepreneurship are of equal distribution.
- 3) JMSP “Service design strategies and innovation” feature a high quality teaching staff.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Marketing activities for the programme and to incentivize the locations are still in need of improvement.
- 2) Too many lecturers are not elected faculty and their primary activities are those outside the consortium.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The content of the study programme which complies with national regulations (as well as approved by the European Commission - SAR p.214), and the courses are clearly defined and designed according to the needs of the labor market, industry, culture area, and essential competencies that are needed in employment processes. The need of the market and the written competences are correlated (SAR, p. 222). The content of the programs according to the SAR (pp. 222-227) has three parts:

- a) First full year of study in Latvia
- b) Second year 1st semester in either Finland or Estonia
- c) Second year 2nd semester in either Finland or Estonia

In the first part of the study programme (the 1st year) which takes place in Latvia, students have the opportunity to acquire service design methods, knowledge and skills, being able to understand and apply the necessary basic knowledge (design, social sciences, technology, entrepreneurship). The 2nd part of the study programme (2nd year) is carried out at the University of Lapland and/or the Estonian Art Academy and includes courses that compliment and conclude with the opportunity to integrate all previously learnt service design skills into service design projects - digital service design, strategic service design and sustainable service design projects.

There is constant involvement of employers - through not only regular feedback to the study programme management but also through live projects - in the improvement of the content of the study programme, which contributes to the preparation of competitive labor market participants and ensuring the development of their professional competences. SAR (pp. 228-230)

Instruction and general educational methods are student-centric and allow a strong student bias.

2.2.2.

The awarding of the MA degree is fully based on the achievements and findings of the chosen topics by the students. The MA study programs rely on research-based activity with the main goal to promote scientific research or artistic creativity. The main task of the Master's programme is to facilitate the development of the Master's thesis, providing students with opportunities to develop a Master's thesis on a permanent and sustainable basis, to acquire new theoretical knowledge, to independently research and practically test new forms of expression, to develop the ability to theoretically justify the creative process, to conduct scientific research, to develop communication skills and to prepare graduates for independent professional activity.

During the site visit it also became evident that the whole student community from all 3 levels of education in the AAL enjoy a cross-program and cross-level teaching and learning experience by bringing all students together in debates, seminars, workshops and exhibitions.

2.2.3.

Every course document provides teaching methods and methods of assessing students' knowledge and skills. Teaching methods are student-centric and allow a strong student voice. During the site visit, it became evident to the team of experts the balance between theory and practice in the teaching methodology is very satisfactory. Faculty involve students in practical activities, dialogue, and group work. Most lectures are using traditional methods, such as reading theory, asking critical questions, showing examples, giving group or peer work.

The teaching methodology also involves teaching and learning through practice and this activity

where both faculty and students are simultaneously involved is to be commended. Additionally the Joint Master study programme “Service design strategies and innovations” utilizes a very good synergy from the 3 countries involved and has an innovative approach towards scientific research design.

The team of experts felt that this joint study programme can be a good example as well as the basis for a good comparison throughout the AAL.

2.2.4.

N/A

2.2.5.

N/A

2.2.6.

All topics of students’ thesis that were presented to the team of experts during the site visit were found to be relevant to the fields and the academic domains of the AAL and fully corresponded to the study programme. Final Thesis as documented in the SAR (p. 227) is a research-based activity.

At the end of the studies, graduates of the Joint Master programme develop a diploma thesis on an individually selected topic related to the content focus of the socio-political current issues of the society. The practical performance of the theses can be seen annually in physical or digital form in the form of a presentation.

An overview of various theses projects was also made possible through the Annex section of the e platform. Themes related to current socio-political issues and socially-based situations.

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

The students-centered paradigm is dominating in the study programme construction, realization and development: faculty, students and alumni state positive opinions and also show that the programme fulfills students and labor market needs. The structure of the study programme is well thought out and follows a sequential and progressional order, contributing to the achievement of the study programme’s learning outcomes. The synergies among the three institutions are strong and also contribute to the enhancement of the students' teaching and learning experience.

Strengths:

- 1) Students are quite satisfied with teaching methods, balance of theory and practice.
- 2) Students are free to choose Topics of Final Thesis (paper) and discuss with lectures and practice place experts about its correlation with specialization and study program.
- 3) The structure of the study programme is well thought out and developed and provides a good sample for a QA policy based on the good synergy of the collaboration

Weaknesses:

None

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: Fully compliant

Being a research-based programme, students on this programme work on analysis, hypotheses, experimentation and implementation of research findings and contribute to new knowledge in the respective academic field and social design.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

There is adequate scientific support for the implementation of the master's study programme process (highly qualified specialists from various fields, including from other institutions in Latvia and partner institutions, are involved in the provision of the study programme). For the implementation of the programme, there is sufficient provision of information and excellent practical networking of institutions and a perfect base for the realization of the study process in Kuldīga. The material, technical and financial support for the implementation of the programme is convincing, which creates prerequisites for achieving the study results and indicates the possibility of ensuring a high-quality study process. The study programme proves itself as a necessary programme in the market with a competition for paid study places. Library resources are available to the students, but experts found out that materials are basically available only on the premises. AAL should change such an approach and digitalise, open the library remotely, so students have access to all of the literature that they need. Otherwise the Library covers all necessary information materials for students to successfully complete the study programme.

2.3.2.

N/A

2.3.3.

Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations" is expensive for the Latvian market (SAR, page 232), but considering its international realization and demand, it is adequate. The structure of the study programme implementation provides for student mobility: the first two semesters of study are planned in Latvia, the third – in Finland or Estonia, with student groups splitting in half, while the fourth – also in Finland or Estonia, where students who studied in Finland during the third semester will study in Estonia and vice versa (SAR, page 228).

As far as it is understood, the funding attached to the Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations" is subject to application. Giving the opportunity to cover all expenses related to the realization of the study process. The Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations" has an excellent number of students (in year 2022 - 20 students, including international), which confirms the profitability of the study programme and gives hope for its sustainability (SAR, page 7). Based on Expert visit, a sufficient material and technical base to ensure the Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations", perhaps the library should be supplemented with specific literature useful for the programme.

The study programme has realised in Erasmus Mundus project, the condition of Erasmus Mundus study programmes is to ensure international mobility and study volume of at least 30 ECTS (semester) for students in 2 countries, which are different from the countries of citizenship of the students (SAR, page 214). The structure and form of the specific master's study programme is a proof of AAL's ability to adapt to market demand and new challenges for filling the free market niche internationally.

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

The specific Joint academic master's degree study program "Service design strategies and innovations" is an example for other programmes to aspire to, its structure and form is a proof of AAL's ability to adapt to market demand and new challenges to fill the free market niche internationally. The programme has been able to attract industry excellence in Latvia and internationally for its implementation, ensuring a competitive offer internationally.

Strengths:

- 1) Highly qualified international academic staff.
- 2) The infrastructure, research and practical environment of AAL and partner institutions are at an appropriate level.
- 3) There is a sufficient material and technical base to ensure the study process, perhaps the library should be supplemented with specific literature useful for the programme.

Weaknesses:

None.

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

Resources and Provision for the master's degree study level are good. Students have access and can arrange all of the resources available to the AAL to reach their study programme learning outcomes.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

Due to the learning-by-doing nature of the master's study programme and according to the goals and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, it includes experienced research practitioners as teaching staff of which all have previous experience of teaching in an international environment and have all professional experiences in the fields of which are relevant to the study field. However, part of the teaching staff are also academically profiled individuals who have records of extensive research and academic achievements in an international academic environment. According to SAR (Study programmes for accreditation, 3.4), teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme are 7 elected, of this 3 associate professors (habilitation at the AAL), 3 assistant professors (2 habilitation at the AAL and 1 at the EKA - Estonian Academy of Arts) and one university teacher (habilitation at the LAY - University of Lapland) and 21 guest lecturers and 2 university teachers without habilitation. On the website of the study programme, they have a short presentation of each member of academic staff with the indication of the course they teach. They use the LinkedIn platform for more information about their CVs. The qualifications of the teaching staff certainly comply with the requirements for quality implementation of the study programme. However, considering that this is a master's study programme after all, it would be appropriate to include in the AAL Regulation on Academic Positions an article on the minimum requirements for academic titles that specifically defines requirements for the learning-by-doing master's programme or carry out habilitation procedures for guest lecturers. From the reviewed data, there is no doubt that the teaching staff complies with the requirements, only now for this specific study programme it is not regulated within the AAL. However, the qualifications of the teaching staff comply with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education (Section 55, paragraph 1, clause 3 of the Law of the Higher Education Institutions). According to the SAR in the implementation of the study field 8 hold PhD, 5 are doctoral students, 15 have Master's degree and 2 lecturers have higher education diplomas.

2.4.2.

It is clear from the interviews that the management of the Joint master's study programme regularly monitors possible changes that might occur in the composition of the teaching staff. Changes are also made based on complaints and well-argued comments from students. At the beginning of each academic year, they perform the so-called summer schools, meetings where teaching staff make suggestions for changes and improvements as it was described during the interviews by the Chair of the programme. It was clear from the interviews that the latter are taken into account and implemented already in the next academic year. As stated in the SAR, since the beginning of the study programme 5 members of the teaching staff have changed (one from AAL, LAY and EKA, and two from Stockholm School of Economics Riga) with 3 members from AAL, one each from Stockholm School of Economics Riga and LAY. Changes have not affected the study programme. Experts would like to highlight that the MA program is academic and requires research activities. It can be a potential shortcoming to include a large number of non-habilitated teaching staff in research projects. Habilitation procedures also enable the stable development of teaching staff and objective analysis of their work during the selection period. Experts understand the unique position of SDSI programme but from risk management point of view, Academy can not ensure that they will be able to maintain in long term all these specialists as lecturers.

2.4.3.

N/A

2.4.4.

From the obtained document in SAR (Procedure. Programmes Annexes) the number of teaching staff is 30, of which only 7 have elected academic positions at higher education institutions (3 associate professor, 3 assistant professor (docent), 1 university teacher), majority of which are elected at the AAL (5). It is evident from the teaching staff CVs on the website that all teaching staff fully follow the requirements of creative experience and in some cases extensive published peer-reviewed editions since. They ensure that the requirements for five years of practical experience are met, as their expertise comes precisely from creative achievements. All of the 30 members of the teaching staff have previous experiences of teaching in an international study environment, experience of participating in conferences, research projects and exhibitions, and professional experience in the fields which are relevant to the study programme. However, the pedagogical training and methodologies in teaching would be recommended, as there is a risk of inconsistency between the approaches of elected teaching staff and teaching staff as guest lecturers. The elected academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme (Section 55, paragraph 1, clause 3 of the Law of the Higher Education Institutions) is a total 7 elected, but only 3 of them are ranked associate professor. But according to the goals of the implementation of the study programme, the planned learning outcomes and according to the Law of the Higher Education Institutions, section 55, paragraph 1, clause 2, it is recommended that a larger part of the lecturers are guest lecturers, who due to their professional excellence, comply with the requirements of publishing in peer reviewed publications/editions and public presentations in the last six years.

2.4.5.

Since it is a joint master's study programme SDSI in which six partners (Art Academy of Latvia, University of Lapland, The Estonian Academy of Arts, Stockholm School of Economics Riga, Kuldīga Municipality and Kuldīga Artists' Residence) participate, four of which are higher educational institutions, the mechanism for mutual cooperation has been established during the preparation of the programme and is embedded in the core of the programme itself. The programme thus includes not only interconnections between courses within each institution, but also between them and external partners. The way of mutual cooperation that has been established in the SDSI study programme can be an example of how to create connecting synergies that also could be implemented throughout other study programmes at the AAL.

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

The teaching staff demonstrate very substantive and numerous creative activities outside of teaching load, thus ensuring the quality alignment of their achievements with the requirements for the academic positions and therefore ensures the interconnections of study courses within study programmes. A good balance between teaching staff from practice and academic teaching staff is noticeable. However, currently the ratio between habilitated lecturers and the external (guest) lecturers is 1:3. At the moment, they have a unified presentation for each lecturer (internal or guest) on LinkedIn, which one can access from the website of the Joint master's programme SDSI, but the presentation of the individual lecturer is not available on the AAL website, since the first year is entirely carried out at AAL. They have a suitable ratio in terms of academic education - 8 PhD, 15 master's degree, 2 with university higher education and 5 doctoral students. The management of the programme is responsive to the comments and remarks of students and lecturers, and they regularly include changes and corrections in the implementation of the study programme. As a result, they have established good communication and cooperation with all partner institutions.

Strengths:

1) The teaching staff is strongly embedded in the local, regional and international professional practices and business environment and has extensive creative achievements in the subfields of their practice based research work all of which is evident from the publicly published presentations of individual lecturers with the uniform use of the LinkedIn (e.g. Corporate UX Manager and Design System Product Owner, Stockholm/Sweden, Executive Board Member, Presentation Guild, Cincinnati/Ohio/USA, Editor in Chief, Diena Pec, Riga/Latvia, CEO of ed-tech company, Riga/Latvia, Advisor to Dobele Adult Education and Information Center, Tech Innovation Strategy Executive, Head of Innovation Accenture Baltics ect).

Weaknesses:

1) There is a risk of pedagogical inconsistency between the approaches of academic teaching staff and teaching staff coming from practice.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The qualifications of the teaching staff Joint academic master's study programme, certainly comply with the Law on Higher Education Institution, however it would be advisable since many of the teaching staff are guest lecturers to regulate that within Baylaws on the Academic Positions at the AAL.

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 has been evaluated in accordance with Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 240. Study programme is 4 semesters long, and covers also Civil and Environmental defense study courses in case the student did not undergo this course at BA level. Master thesis work

consists at least of 20 CP (See annex 5).

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme is being implemented only in the English language. Study course descriptions are available in English and comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1 , Paragraph two and Section 56.2 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The diploma supplement version that is provided from the AAL is outdated and does not correspond to the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 202 for issuing Higher education diplomas. As currently Estonia is only an associated collaborator not a full member of the programme it is not mandatory to include information about the Estonian education system etc. Diploma also does not include information about agreement of joint study programme date and time in the first page.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

ALL have provided to experts confirmation that staff complies with this requirement. Based on the list of staff members involved in the study process, experts conclude that there are enough PhD holders involved in the implementation of the study programme. Annex 9_pielikums_macibspēku_saraksts.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

AAL has provided confirmation that teaching staff 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. See annex. LMA_AIC_valoda_ENG.

- 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

AAL has provided documents stating each involved staff member English level proficiency. Annex 9_pielikums_macibspēku_saraksts.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study agreement sample provided complies with the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 70. and are included in the agreement.

- 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: Partially compliant

The AAL has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in academic Master level study programme "Arts" in Latvian Academy of Culture if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. See annex

10_Pielikums_sadarbības_līgums_Ima_Ika_prec. Although this study programme code is 45214, in the Latvian Academy of Culture students will be able to enroll in programme with code 45212, so they will not obtain the same qualification as intended and the study programme is held only in English language, but their offered programme is in Latvian.

- 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

The AAL 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 and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme. See Annex

LMA_AIC_Zaudejumu_kompensacija

- 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: Fully compliant

The joint study programme comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.1., Paragraphs one. It is a joint study programme with partner institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

AAL has not provided a diploma and diploma supplement that follows Cabinet of Ministers regulations. Additionally there is no confirmation about having professors' involvement in the study process. The confirmation that students will be able to continue their studies is not sufficient, since the implementation language and study programme codes are not the same. And Information about staff English language proficiency is also missing.

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

Overall this is a Joint academic master's degree study programme which can be characterized as quite innovative by adopting a very international profile by default since it is a programme divided in 3 major cities and institutions that encourages the mobility among all 3 institutions. The Joint academic master's degree study programme has been well structured and thought out and has a strong definition of its aims and objectives as well as its learning outcomes. According to the SAR (p. 215) the diversity of students from different countries, aided by scholarships, which are made possible by the Erasmus Mundus funds, promotes cultural diversity and enhances international student exchange, offering a chance for students and the academic community to experience and learn from a wealth of cultural perspectives. This aspect reaffirms the attractiveness of the Joint academic master's degree study programme and its significant role in the international education landscape. The Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations" can be a very good example of a good practice and a reference for other programmes. The content of the study programme is comparable to other Master programmes around the world, but what makes this particular programme more distinctive is the synergy of the institutional as well as geographical and cultural input of the participating Universities.

The final consensus on the rating for this programme is Good since it is believed by the team of experts that there is room for improvement in all aspects.

Evaluation of the study programme "Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations""

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations""

Short-term recommendations

1) There is a risk of pedagogical dissonance between the approaches of elected teaching staff and guest lecturers. Group of experts recommends specific pedagogical short training sessions with presentations of teaching methodologies adopted for guest lecturers.

Long-term recommendations

1) Carry out habilitation procedures for external lecturers, this would ensure an objective evaluation of the artistic and research creation and publications of external lecturers.

II - "Art" ASSESSMENT

II - "Art" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The academic doctoral study programme "Art" (DSP "Art") fits well in the study field "Arts" with the code 51211 which stands for Visual Plastic Art, in accordance with Cabinet regulations No. 322. Both the name and the code of the DSP "Art" comply with the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 "Regulations of the classification of education in Latvia". Because the programme, since its foundation of LAA, coincided with the establishment of the Latvian state, it has embodied the national school of art and design and the highest level of academic studies preparing specialists for independent, creative and versatile scientific research work in the aspects of art science and cultural theory within the Baltic States and internationally (SAR, pp.17-18). The length of the doctoral study programme is three years, providing the opportunity to complete studies, defend a qualified doctoral thesis and obtain 144 credit points or 216 ECTS, by participating in scientific conferences with reports, preparing publications on the subject of the research work, as well as taking state examinations (SAR, p.106). The awarding degree is Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Humanities and Arts. The learning outcomes and objectives of the programme are interrelated, i.e., to provide knowledge in the scientific theories and insights into arts, with emphasis on theory, practice and methodology in the studies of Latvian cultural issues, an interdisciplinary approach within the European and global cultural context.

During the on-site visit, the expert panel found that the scholastic contribution and qualities of the theses are high, it remains to be seen whether the practical doctoral program can match that.

The graduates of the study programme continue to work in the industry related to art, architecture, education, or culture and continue their research, by participating in conferences, giving lectures, and publishing research after receiving their doctoral degree but the PhD degrees awarded annually at the Academy is small (in comparison with how many students actually study in the programme); perhaps, with the upcoming governmental policies and streamlined procedures with respect to the doctoral programs in Latvia, the length of obtaining the degree will be shorter.

2.1.2.

According to (SAR, pp. 102-107), the title, code, degree to be obtained, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated, i.e., in providing knowledge in art and its most topical scientific theories and insights, which would allow learning research methodology and modern art research methods, the preparation of specialists on an internationally recognized level who, by performing independent critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation, are able to solve important research or innovation tasks, is ensured. The study programme is implemented by updating the teaching and research process, including current issues of modern art science theory,

practice and methodology in the studies of Latvian cultural issues, supplementing them with an interdisciplinary approach, as well as the European and global cultural context. The length of the Doctoral study programme is three years, providing the opportunity to complete studies, defend a qualified doctoral thesis and obtain 144 credit points or 216 ECT. By participating in scientific conferences with reports, preparing publications on the subject of the research work, as well as taking state examinations, the doctoral student creates the prerequisites for a successful academic career and lays the foundation for its evaluation with a Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Humanities and Arts.

The programme adheres to the Rules of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 1001 "Procedures and criteria for awarding a scientific doctorate (promotional) degree", which stipulates that a scientific doctorate degree, abbreviated as Ph.D., is awarded for a successfully defended doctoral thesis, as well as to the Constitution of the AAL, Senate decisions of the AAL and the AAL's doctoral studies regulations. The study programme is implemented in accordance with the research directions of AAL, as well as the current affairs of the art, design, and creative industries industry in Latvia, Europe and globally. On the minor downside, no PhD candidate handbook, which spells out the procedure for obtaining the degree, could be expanded.

2.1.3.

According to (SAR, p.106), no significant changes have been made to the parameters of the study programme that helps doctoral students in researching their doctoral thesis, choosing a methodology, promoting their research, and preparing them for the mandatory state exams have been introduced into the study programme.

During the reporting period, the number of credit points to be obtained has been increased from 140 CP to 144 CP or 216 ECTS. This is due to the introduced study courses and the study results included in it. Furthermore, SAR (p.106) states that "the DSP "Art" was accredited on May 24, 2013 (Decision No. 33 of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Latvia)". Perhaps, it is a mistype but the publicly available accreditation license granted on the same date states that the issuing institution is the Ministry of Education (<https://www.lma.lv/uploads/pages/lv/13/files/akreditacijas-lapa.pdf>)

2.1.4.

Based on the information provided in on-site visit, the DSP "Art" is in line with the needs of the Latvian societal and economic development, where the importance of culture and arts and the scientific research development as well as strengthening the quality of the society's life, sustainability and resilience, are based on principles of humanistic-based societal values. The set of priorities, hence, reflect the guidelines of the National Development Plan of Latvia 2021-2027 (https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/latvijas-nacionalais-attistibas-plans?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F) and the priority in higher education to implement a competitive cultural and arts education that is focused on human resource development, promotion of artistic creation and research, as well as stimulating the internationalization of education and compliance with the Cultural Policy documents - Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022-2027 "Cultural State" (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/330444-kulturpolitikas-pamatnostadnes-2021-2027-gadam-kulturvalsts>).

During the reporting period (2017-2022; Annex "Statistics on the students in the reporting period"), and it is indicated in (SAR, p.109), a competition of 3-4 applicants for one study place ensures a good selection of chosen PhD candidates, and with an average of 42 doctoral students annually. The concern, however, is a low number of PhD graduates: according to the Annex only 1 PhD was awarded for the years 2021, and 2020, with zero for years 2018, and 2019. In comparison with MA and BA levels programs at the Academy, the dropout rate percentage is not significant but it appears the candidates are somewhat "stuck" in writing up finishing their theses after the main theoretical studies have been completed. The SAR on the DSP "Art" is scant is rather short, as no admission procedure are expounded in the relevant section, instead, the summary "by participating in scientific conferences with reports, preparing publications on the subject of the research work, as well as taking state examinations, the doctoral student creates the prerequisites for a successful

academic career and lays the foundation for its evaluation with a Doctor of Arts degree” (SAR, p.106) supposedly gives a gist of the program. Yet, such an information is given on the web page of the program (<https://www.lma.lv/studijas/uznemsana-2023/uznemsana-doktora-studijas>), and the admission requirements follow the standard procedures seen in other internationally recognized PhD programs in arts, with the core being a research proposal, later evaluated on its scholastic merits.

Graduates of the study programme are employed in the industry or continue their scientific work. Furthermore, almost 100% of AAL doctoral programme graduates continue to work in the industry related to art, architecture, education, or culture. Doctoral students who graduated in the reporting period who work: in universities - 55% or 10 (as elected academic and/or scientific staff); in museums - 39% or 7 and in a private company, as an employer - 6% or 1. 75% of the graduates of the doctoral program have previously completed bachelor's or master's studies at the AAL. Only 11% of graduates are men; the average age of graduates with a doctoral degree is 40-50 years. 0.28% (or 5) doctoral graduates participated in the survey on average income, of which 40% (or 2) stated that the average monthly income exceeds 2,000 Euros; one respondent indicated an income level of 1000 - 1550 Euros; and one up to 500 Euro per month. Most of the graduates continue their research, participate in conferences, give lectures, and publish research after receiving their doctoral degree (SAR, p.108).

One must add, however, the SAR report with respect to this chapter is somewhat scant. In accordance with the open sources publicly available, the number of doctoral degree holders in Latvia is 2-2.5 times less than what is needed for the regeneration of researchers, which is one of the main tasks of science policy in the country (<https://www.cfi.lu.lv/par-mums/zinas/zina/t/69764/>). Hence, the economic and strategic need for DSP “Art” is sound.

2.1.5.

N/A

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

The academic doctoral study programme "Art" (DSP “Art”) fits well in the study field "Arts" with the code 51211, which stands for Visual Plastic Art, in accordance with Cabinet regulations No. 322. t. The programme adheres to the Rules of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 1001 "Procedures and criteria for awarding a scientific doctorate (promotional) degree." During the reporting period, the number of credit points to be obtained has been increased from 140 KP to 144 CP or 216 ECTS. The title, code, degree to be obtained, scholastic acumen to be obtained in the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated, i.e., in providing knowledge in art and its most topical scientific theories and insights, which would allow learning research methodology and modern art research methods, the preparation of specialists on an internationally recognized level.

Based on the information provided in on-site visit, the DSP “Art” is in line with the needs of the Latvian societal and economic development, where the importance of culture and arts and the scientific research development as well as strengthening the quality of the society's life, sustainability and resilience, are based on principles of humanistic-based societal values. One must add, however, the SAR report with respect to this chapter is somewhat scant. What is known is that the number of doctoral degree holders in Latvia is highly insufficient for the regeneration of researchers (<https://www.cfi.lu.lv/par-mums/zinas/zina/t/69764/>), hence, the economic and strategic substantiation for the DSP “Art” is sound.

Strengths:

- 1) As the oldest PhD programme at the Academy, its track record and experience is sound.
- 2) The DSP “Art” theses and their scholastic value exhibit a great deal of competences and commendable scientific contribution.

Weaknesses:

- 1) No student handbook provided that would ease the information on procedures and criteria for awarding a scientific doctorate (promotional) degree and the logistics of it.
- 2) Low number of awarded degrees in relation to the student body.
- 3) The length of the write-up period (from enrollment to being awarded a degree appears too long).
- 4) The SAR report with respect to the programme is too brief.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

According to the evidence on the SAR (p. 109) in the process of studying the DSP “Art” the student acquires the highest level of academic studies in which specialists are prepared for independent, creative and versatile scientific research work in the aspects of art science and cultural theory.

The content of the study programme and their courses is clearly defined and designed according to the objectives of the programme and its learning outcomes, and correspond to the needs of the labor market, industry, culture area, and scientific trends. The need of the market and the written competences are correlated (SAR, p. 112).

The content of the programme is relevant and specific and has three parts:

A- mandatory courses which includes the development of the proposal and thesis document,

B - limited electives provide studies of the latest achievements in the field of interdisciplinary research of art and culture, provide in-depth learning in the linking of philosophical theories and art processes that influenced art in the 20th and 21st centuries, and are most important in its interpretation, as well as in the interaction and role of arts in the 20-21st century.

C - free electives where doctoral students have the opportunity to learn the presentation and interpretation of specific topics in the lectures of internationally recognized researchers and guest lecturers. The 1st part which is mandatory and includes the development of the thesis text, participation in conferences, preparation of publications, and work in doctoral seminars. The 2nd part, which calls for limited elective courses in the field of interdisciplinary research of art and culture, provides in-depth learning in the linking of philosophical theories and art processes that influenced art in the 20th and 21st centuries. The last part (free electives) doctoral students have the opportunity to learn the presentation and interpretation of specific topics in the lectures of internationally recognized researchers and guest lecturers.

Instruction and general educational methods allow a strong student bias. There is a strong interconnectivity among all study programs in the Academy that brings students from various levels of study from Bachelor to Master to Doctorate together and this allows for a strong art and design community which interacts, debates and works positively towards the achievement of high standards. The Doctorate study programme complies fully with national, international and professional regulations as described in the SAR (p. 111) and was established in compliance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions as well as the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia of October 2, 2018.

2.2.2.

The awarding of the Doctorate degree is fully based on the achievements and findings of the chosen topics by the students. The DSP relies on research-based activity with the main goal to promote scientific research or artistic creativity. The Scientific Doctoral study programme in arts promotes the research, popularization, evaluation, and actualization of the fields of humanities and art science and the field of contemporary art and design, allowing students and teachers to participate in the creation of new knowledge. The main task of the Doctorate's programme is to facilitate the development of the Doctorate thesis, providing students with opportunities to develop a thesis on a permanent and sustainable basis, to acquire new theoretical knowledge, to independently research

and practically test new forms of expression, to develop the ability to theoretically justify the creative process, to conduct scientific research, to develop communication skills and to prepare graduates for independent professional activity.

The overall opinion of the team of experts for the awarding of the degree on the DSP is relevant and sufficient to the relevant field of science, research, and artistic creation. During the site visit it also became evident that the whole student community from all 3 levels of education in the AAL enjoy a cross-programme and cross-level teaching and learning experience by bringing all students together in debates, seminars, workshops and exhibitions.

2.2.3.

Doctoral study programme is implemented with a focus on student-centered education aimed at achieving learning outcomes and study programme goals. In this regard, various course/module implementation methods, assessment techniques and strategies are used, which contribute to the achievement of the goals of the study programme. Instruction models are based on the organization of interactive lectures and seminars that encourage active participation and critical thinking among students. During the discussions, students can share their ideas, experiences and knowledge, thus deepening their understanding of the topic being studied (SAR p.114). The courses of the study programme are focused on the effective use of the latest scientific and artistic findings in the works of doctoral students.

Every course document provides teaching methods and methods of assessing students' knowledge and skills. Teaching methods are student-centric and allow a strong student voice. During the site visit, it became evident to the team of experts the balance between theory and practice in the teaching methodology is very satisfactory. Faculty involve students in practical activities, dialogue, and group work. Most lectures are using traditional methods, such as reading theory, asking critical questions, showing examples, giving group or peer work.

The teaching methodology also involves teaching and learning through practice and this activity where both faculty and students are simultaneously involved is to be commended.

2.2.4.

N/A

2.2.5.

According to the SAR (p. 116), the procedure for the promotional process is determined by the regulations of the AAL doctoral programme. Promotion at AAL is possible in science fields where doctoral study programmes are accredited in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 1001. AAL operates a Promotional Council, which has the right to award a scientific degree in the field of Humanities and Arts "Music, Visual Arts and Architecture", as well as in the field of the Creative Industry. The doctorate scientific degree is awarded for a doctoral thesis independently developed and publicly defended under the supervision of an experienced scientist (professor, associate professor, assistant professor and/or researcher; a leading researcher who has been approved in accordance with the procedure established by the AAL). The doctoral thesis can be a dissertation, a thematically unified set of scientific publications, or a monograph - a peer-reviewed scientific book dedicated to one topic. For a doctoral student, high-quality doctoral studies are completed by passing all the exams and tests provided in the doctoral studies plan, submitting the doctoral thesis for the defense of the doctoral scientific degree at the AAL Promotional Council, publicly defending the doctoral thesis, and obtaining the doctoral scientific degree. According to the SAR (p.115) during doctoral studies, the student must pass two exams:

- 1) in the specialty according to the topic of the doctoral thesis;
- 2) in one foreign language (English, German, French or another European language. With the permission of the management of doctoral studies, the exam in a foreign language can also be taken at another higher education institution).

An important part of doctoral studies is the promotion of research, publications, and participation in conferences, which are related to the thesis and its popularization. Publications that correspond to

the level of doctoral studies are considered to be publications published in internationally cited publications. Participation in conferences means participation with reports as a registered speaker or head of a conference working group.

During the site visit the teams of experts realized that students and faculty had contradicting opinion on the rules of the DSP admissions, promotion and final submission regulations.

2.2.6.

As described in the SAR (pp. 116-117) the topics of student research and doctoral theses, added to the doctoral study programme, are chosen according to the current affairs of the industry and global trends that affect the development of national and European-level policy and practice in Latvia. The topics are very diverse and cover a wide range of sectors and both national and international levels of research. The doctoral study programme at AAL includes the following thematic lines: history of architecture and art of Latvia and the countries of the Baltic region; History of European architecture and art; History and methodology of art theory; Art psychology, pedagogy, and sociology; History of design, theory, 117 and connection with the production, aspects of Latvian ethnocultural, cultural contacts; The role of modern electronic media in art processes, virtual methods that manipulate art, Marketing theory and practice, History of cultural monuments, theory, and practice. During the reporting period, 11 (eleven) doctoral theses have been defended on current topics in art history, theory, architecture, and design.

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

The students-centered paradigm is dominating in the study programmes construction, realization and development: faculty, students and alumni state positive opinions and also show that the programmes fulfill students and labor market needs.

The content of the study programme is topical, and the study courses are interconnected and complementary, corresponding to the objectives of the programme as well as the needs of the industry. The awarding of a degree is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant field of science or artistic creation. The study implementation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme and the approach is student-centered. Students have clearly defined promotion (doctoral thesis defense) opportunities and the topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme.

Strengths:

- 1) Students are quite satisfied with teaching methods, balance of theory and practice.
- 2) Students are free to choose Topics of Final Thesis (paper) and discuss with lectures and practice-based experts about its correlation with specialization and study programme.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The DSP manual (document) is not clearly formulated and it is not readily available to all faculty and students.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Being a higher research-based programme, students on this programme work on analysis, hypotheses, experimentation and implementation of research findings and contribute to new

knowledge in the respective academic field.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

There is sufficient provision of information for the implementation of the programme, which includes the resources available in the library and the support mechanism of scientific institutes, including the publications to be cited. The material and technical provision for the implementation of the programme is adequate. Financial security is appropriate for the implementation of the programme, which creates prerequisites for achieving study results. Taking into account that the Art Academy of Latvia is partly financed from the budget, which receives funding from the state budget, according to the amount of funding of the Doctoral study program, resources, and software are regularly renewed and improved (SAR, page 118).

2.3.2.

Cooperation with other scientific institutions and universities (SAR, page 120) (joint research, projects, scientific publications, conferences, etc.) is excellent in the implementation of the doctoral study programme. The programme implemented by AAL fully complies with the conditions for the implementation of the doctoral study programme, ensuring the availability of visual art scientific materials in the region.

The research results of the teaching and academic staff involved in the implementation of the AAL doctoral study programme are regularly reflected in scientific journals and conference materials. AAL regularly organizes the annual international scientific conference, after which an internationally peer-reviewed collection of articles is published. The Institute of Art History of AAL regularly publishes the journal "Mākslas teorija" (trans. Art Theory) included in the SCOPUS database (SAR, page 126).

The good characterize programme point, during the period of 2020 - 2023, the scientific researches carried out within the framework of the professional doctoral study program were integrated into two research (SAR, pages 147-148).

2.3.3.

The study costs of the DSP "Art" per student are determined according to the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers on December 12, 2006 No. 994 (SAR, page 121-122), which are covered by the State, AAL provides conference participation costs for doctoral study students as far as possible, and it is good support for doctoral students. The funding available for the DSP "Art" is adequate, but could be higher, giving the opportunity to realize even higher quality research in the future. The Doctor of Arts study programme has an appropriate number of doctoral students in general (36 in year 2022, SAR, page 7), it would be desirable to obtain a higher doctoral thesis after completing the doctorate, which is the only disadvantage of the programme.

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

Conclusions:

The implementation of the doctoral study programme process at AAL is a logical continuation of the master of arts degree in art science, ensuring the continuation of education at a high level. The implementation of the programme has appropriate scientific support and sufficient provision of information. The material and technical provision and infrastructure for the implementation of the programme are sufficient. The DSP "Art" has an appropriate number of doctoral students. AAL's existing resources and provision guarantee a high-quality content realization programme, ensuring its sustainability and significant development for the Latvian economy. This is confirmed by the results of the programme so far, research articles in cited journals and defended doctoral theses and

published monographs.

Strengths:

- 1) AAL's infrastructure, research and practical work spaces are arranged for conducting research work. The structure and criteria for obtaining a doctoral degree are clearly developed.
- 2) Excellent cooperation with the Art Research Institute in the implementation of the study process.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Low number of doctoral theses defended (11) thesis during the whole extended reporting period against graduates of study programme (On average 24 students each year).

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Compliance of the study provision, science provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes is perfect, based on information in SAR and based of received information in expert group meetings with students, academic staff, employers e.t.c

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

There is appropriate scientific support for the implementation of the doctoral level study process (highly qualified specialists, professors with a Ph.D. degree are involved in providing the study programme (14 with PhD, SAR, page 122)). The programme already has a sufficient history of implementation to evaluate it as a proven and important programme in art science. The academic staff elected by the AAL that is involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme regularly publishes research results on an international level. According to the SAR (Study Programme 51211, 3.4.1) the implementation of the study programme is ensured by 5 professors, 2 associated professors, 2 assistant professors and 4 senior researchers elected to the relevant academic position in the LAA. Academic staff of the AAL's structural units involved in the implementation of the doctoral programme consists of five of them holding PhD, seven Dr. Art. and two Dr. phil. The academic staff of the doctoral study programme fully complies with the requirements for the quality implementation of the study programme. They cover different scientific fields - Humanities and Arts (Music, Visual Arts and Architecture, Linguistic and Literature Arts) and Social Sciences (Media and Communication). Based on the CVs received the external academic staff also participate in the implementation of the study programme. They participate as mentors of doctoral thesis or in the study process. Their references demonstrate a wide range of professional and research activity and teaching at foreign higher education institutions. Some of their references include, but are not limited to, participation in conferences related to the study programme, curatorship of exhibitions, invited public lectures, publication of book chapters, solo and group exhibitions. Many of them are also recipients of national and international professional awards. As stated in SAR (Study programme Art 51211, 3.4.1), 9 academic staff that participate in the implementation of the study programme are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council. Eight

(8) experts are in the the field of Humanities and Arts (Music, Visual Arts and Architecture, Linguistics and Literature Studies) and one (1) expert is approved in the field of Social Sciences in subsector Media and Communication, however a specific mention of this by name is recorded only for one lecturer. However, in the Confirmation letter by the head of doctoral study department it is stated that academic staff of the Doctoral study programme consists of no less than five doctors, of whom at least three are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the branch or sub-branch of sciences in which the study programme is awarding a scientific degree.

2.4.2.

No particular changes have been detected in the composition of the teaching staff in the doctoral study programme in recent years. Despite the stable operation of the programme, it is good that two external guest lecturers are involved in the implementation of the programme. Considering the generational division of the teaching staff, experts believe that they take care of the long-term stability of the high-quality implementation of the programme, since the education of teaching staff at the 3rd level of higher education programmes requires several years of education and the necessary academic socialization.

2.4.3.

Teaching staff have experience in scientific areas that respects specifics of the study programme. The academic staff conducts scientific research projects whose relevance is evident within the implementation of a high-quality performance of the doctoral study programme. Here it is necessary to highlight two research projects, namely 'Cultural Capital as a Resource for the Sustainable Development of Latvia', which was carried out between 2020 and 2022, and 'EU4ART_differences' in 2020 (SAR, Study programme Art 51211, 3.2.2). Both of them were carried out in close cooperation with the Latvian Academy of Culture and Jazeps Vitols Latvian Music Academy, the institutions that they already cooperate at the Professional Doctoral Studies. For the long-term development of research work it would be advisable to develop a larger number of the research projects and to get funding for them also with institutions outside of Latvia, moreover it is recommended that the research project also be of a longer period (both named had a duration of one or two years).

2.4.4.

The academic staff implementing the doctoral study programme has a record of scientific and research excellence. In the last six years they have published in peer-reviewed editions, including international editions. In this context it is necessary to point out the edition of the indexed Journal of Art History and Theory and numerous peer reviewed published articles and papers, which are all recorded on the website of the Institute of Art History (books - Senatorium Architecture in Latvia 1918-1940 (2021), Vodtemārs Zeltinņš, (2018); e-publications - Architecture and Urban Planning in Riga in 2nd half of the 17th century (2016), The First Riga City Architect Jahann Daniel Felsko (2012), articles - The Migration and Artist and Architects in Central and Northern Europe 1560-1900 (2022); conference papers: 21st Boris Vipper Memorial Readings 'Medieval Architecture and Art in Latvia' (2019). Annually the teaching staff publishes more than 50 articles in domestic and international scientific publications, of which 15-20 are cited by SCOPUS. The implementation of the study programme involves a teaching staff of 5 professors, 2 associate professors, 2 assistant professors, 4 senior researchers. They have two guest lecturers. From the data in SAR it is evident that each member of the academic staff in the last six years has published in peer-reviewed editions and international editions, and have research and artistic achievements: assoc. prof. dr. Agita Gritane has published a book and organized the exhibition in 2020; prof. dr. art. Andris Teikmanis has participated in six conferences, participated in 7 exhibitions and participated in 3 research projects; prof. dr. phil. Janis Taurens has 5 peer-reviewed publications; prof. dr. art. Silvia Grosa has 3 articles published and participated in 3 international conferences; assist. prof. dr. Janis Ozoliņš has 5 peer reviewed publications and 4 artistic achievements; assist. prof. dr. Karlis Verdinš has 5 publications in peer reviewed editions, has published 8 books and participated in 1 artistic creation; assist. prof. dr. Liene Jacobsone has published 9 scientific papers in peer-reviewed editions,

participated in 4 conferences and 4 artistic achievements.

2.4.5.

They participate at various levels of study programmes, but more so when it comes to research projects. They have established mutual cooperation and collaboration on projects with other stakeholders outside of the AAL. The structure of the doctoral thesis defense commission consists of the head of the Doctoral Programme, the head of the Department of the Art Science, the vice-rector of sciences, the director of the Institute of Art History and an invited expert on the topic of the dissertation or a professor of the relevant department within AAL. In some cases they invite additional specialists from AAL or other institutions. Also some of the doctoral students participate at the BA and MA implementation of the study courses and in managing and reviewing bachelor's and masters' thesis (SAR, Study programme Art 5121, 3.2.1).

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

The academic staff has a record of outstanding research and scientific results. Their work has a significant impact on the development and strengthening of Latvian national identity. It would be advisable to increase funding for even more in-depth research projects in order to ensure even greater interconnection of study courses within the study programme.

Strengths:

- 1) Excellence in research work and record of the research results obtained by the publishing service that they have developed within research institutes.
- 2) Highly qualified academic staff (Professors with Ph.D degree).

Weaknesses:

- 1) Insufficient number of international and multi-year research projects that would allow for a greater involvement of the doctoral programme students.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff of the doctoral study programme clearly have respectable research references, both in Latvia and internationally, due to which they fully meet the requirements in the regulatory documents.

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: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme is being implemented only in Latvian language. Study course descriptions are available in Latvian language and comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1 , Paragraph two and Section 56.2 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Only the first page of the diploma has been provided, but this complies with Cabinet of Ministers No. 1001 and Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 202

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Academy has provided a document stating that in the implementation of the doctoral study programme in the Riga there are at least 5 professors involved in accordance with the Law of Higher Education Institutions. See Annex LMA_AIC.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

AAL provided confirmation that 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. (See annex Confirmation_ENG).

- 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

AAL has provided confirmation that teaching staff 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. See annex. LMA_AIC_valoda_ENG.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study agreement sample provided complies with the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 70. and are included in the agreement.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The AAL has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in academic doctor level study programme "Arts" in Latvian Academy of Culture if the implementation of the study programme is terminated. Annex. Ligums_studentu parnemsana 2023_LMA_LKA.

- 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

The AAL 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 and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme. See Annex LMA_AIC_Zaudejumu_kompensacija

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All necessary regulatory requirements are fulfilled for the study programme implementation.

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

Overall the requirements corresponding to Doctoral study programme are fulfilled and this study programme runs with good structure and content, supported by a strong pool of academic staff, technicians, administration and physical resources in diverse areas from traditional wood and stone processes to high end technologies. No deficiencies have been identified that could not be eliminated in a 2-year cycle. The Doctorate programme is supported by a strong team of academics who ensure the quality of the DSP.

The most important strengths of the Doctorate study programme are the dedication of both doctorate candidates and faculty to relate with each other as well as interact in cross-discipline activity and the dynamic research community that is being built up in the academy.

Weaknesses to be considered relate to the formalization and rigorous implementation of the Quality Assurance system and process as well as the reinforced contextualization of the study programme formal document.

The final consensus on the rating for this programme is Good since it is believed by the team of experts that there is room for improvement in all aspects.

Evaluation of the study programme "Art"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Art"

Short-term recommendations

1) To reinforce further the DSP manual (document) and make it readily available to all faculty and students.

Long-term recommendations

1) To empower research groups to apply for multi-year projects for European funds, which would involve research and educational institutions abroad. Experts suggest developing part of the doctoral programme from this, which would be more internationally oriented (similar to Joint Masters' Degree Programme in Services Design Strategies and Innovations).

2) To reinforce and intensify the QA system in terms of formalizing procedures, involving all the whole Academy levels (management/faculty/students/alumni/employers)

3) To develop and advance the level of the written literature related to the SAR and other official documents related to the programme.

4) Add more comprehensive analysis of the study programme for the next accreditation.

5) PhD Students need more encouragement or support, flexibility during the study process and degree candidate period, to encourage them to successfully finish the education with obtaining a PhD degree. Experts concluded that write-up period is too long until the degree is awarded, so the Academy can consider to introduce mandatory partial PhD thesis submission during the study process, for example full literature analysis.

II - "The professional doctoral study programme in Arts "Arts"" ASSESSMENT

II - "The professional doctoral study programme in Arts "Arts"" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The joint professional doctoral study programme "Arts" (hereinafter JPDS "Arts") fits well within the study field "Arts". According to the SAR (p.175) and in experts' opinion, the programme's compliance with the educational field of "Arts", as it is confirmed by the study modules and courses implemented in the JPDS "Arts". Because the programme embodies the national trajectory of its implementation of the artistic processes with society and the cultural and creative industries, where the doctoral programs provides the highest level of academic studies preparing specialists for independent, creative and versatile scientific research work in the aspects of art science and cultural theory within the Baltic States and internationally (SAR, pp.17-18), the partnership aspect with two other leading arts institutions in the country—the Latvian Academy of Culture, and the Jazeps Vitols Latvian Music Academy—, ensures not only the quality but also the scope and mutually enforcing diversity of art forms that cannot be approved on doctoral level. The programme also complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 617 (2 October 2018) "Regulations on the National Standard of the Professional Higher Education for the Doctoral Degree and the Procedures for Awarding of the Professional Doctoral Degree in Arts". Duration of full-time studies is 3 years. In accordance with the requirements of the "Regulations on the National Standard of the Professional Higher Education for the Doctoral Degree and the Procedures for Awarding of the Professional Doctoral Degree in Arts", the programme has 132 CP / 198 ECTS.

2.1.2.

The Joint Professional Doctoral Study program in arts titled "Arts" complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 617 (2 October 2018) "Regulations on the National Standard of the Professional Higher Education for the Doctoral Degree and the Procedures for Awarding of the Professional Doctoral Degree in Arts" Duration of full-time studies is 3 years. The degree awarded is "Professional Doctor's Degree in Arts" which also corresponds to the three programme codes (51211, 51213, 51214).

The title of the study programme is "Arts" in the study field of "Arts" with 4 education classification codes 51211 with the last 3 numbers (211) standing for "Visual Arts", 51213 with the last 3 numbers (213) standing for "Audiovisual Art and Media Art", 51214 with the last 3 numbers (214) standing for "Design" according to the classification of Latvian education No.322

On the basis of the "Agreement on the Implementation of the Sub-programmes "Music and Performing Arts", "Visual Arts and Design" and "Audiovisual Arts, Theatre and Contemporary Dance" of the Joint Professional Doctoral Study program in "Arts" in the study field Arts" concluded on 6 September 2019 (see Annex No. 18), the following sub-programmes shall be provided in the study programme of the above educational institutions: (a) the JVLMA implements the sub-programme "Music and Performing Arts" (code 51212) - fields of artistic activity in Music, choreography, (b), the

LAA implements the sub-programme "Visual Art and Design" (code 5121 1/3/4) - fields of artistic activity in Visual Arts, Audio Visual and Media Arts, Design, and, LAC implements the sub-programme "Audiovisual Art, Theatre and Contemporary Dance" (code 51213) in the artistic fields of Audiovisual Art, Theatre Art, Contemporary Dance Art (SAR, p.175).

The aims of the JPDS "Arts" are interrelated with the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme (SAR, p.172), although the formulation "to organize professional studies meeting cultural, public and societal needs based in artistic creativity and science" are somewhat more general.

SAR (p. 178) states that The aim, tasks, and results of the three sub-programmes of Joint Professional Doctoral program in Arts "Arts" are mutually united, because there is an identical study plan, in which only the Arts' areas of the individual study courses (parts B and C) are different and administered by each institution. Also, the admission requirements are determined by the Senate of each partner higher education institution administering the sub-programmes, as the presence of necessary prior knowledge, skills, and competencies ensures the achievement of the study programme's results. In the AAL sub-programme "Visual Art and Design," doctoral students are admitted in an open and equal competition based on a professional aptitude test and colloquium.

The duration of the JPDS "Arts" is six semesters or three years in the amount of 132 credit points. The programme is licensed both for Latvian and English. The duration and scope of the JPDS "Arts" implementation, as well as the implementation language, are reasonable and justified, i.e., as it has been stated in (SAR, p.179), since 2021/2022 academic year, when the first doctoral student has been admitted to the English stream of the programme, the trend is to line up with other higher education institutions of the joint programmes that plan to expand the volume of students in the English stream in order to ensure the program's international openness, international experience and competitiveness.

After the visit experts team received the study programme handbook which outlines clearly the amount of pages required for the doctorate thesis.

Although the implementation of the joint study programme follows collaborative practices between the three universities, collaboration is still somewhat segregated in each respective institutions, as during the on-site visit the impression the experts got (in meeting session) that there was a considerable work to be done to truly make the programme interdisciplinary, involving the student research across the institutions.

2.1.3.

Submission No. 01/-8/106 and application for licensing of the professional doctoral study programme in Arts (codes 51211/51212/51213/51214) in cooperation with the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music (hereinafter referred to as - JVLAM), the Art Academy of Latvia (hereinafter referred to as - AAL) and the Latvian Academy of Culture (hereinafter - LKA) have been submitted to the Academic Information Centre on 11 June 2020. The AIC experts' joint opinion was received on 25 September 2020, and the decision No. 2020/62-L on the licensing of the study programme was adopted at the meeting of the Study Quality Commission on 30 September 2020. License No. 2020/05K for the right to implement the Joint Professional Doctoral Study programme in arts titled "Arts" was issued, and on the basis of the "Agreement on the Implementation of the Sub-programmes "Music and Performing Arts", "Visual Arts and Design" and "Audiovisual Arts, Theatre and Contemporary Dance" of the Joint Professional Doctoral Study Programme in "Arts" in the study field Arts" concluded on 6 September 2019 (Annex No. 18), the implementation of the program in respective institutions had commenced. There have been no changes in the parameters of the programme since the issuance of the license.

2.1.4.

According to SAR (pp. 179-180), the inception of the JPDS "Arts" has been carried out within the framework of the 2nd round of the project "Creation of the Professional Doctoral Study Program in Arts," No. 8.2.1.0/18/A/009, under the specific support objective "Reduce fragmentation of study

programs and strengthen resource sharing" of the Operational Program "Growth and Employment." With this in mind, the relevance of the program is reflected in the strategic planning documentation of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia - for example, in the "Cultural Education Sector Strategy 2014-2020" (in Latvian) under the section "Cultural Education and Formation of Excellence", the Ministry of Culture's activity - to facilitate the cooperation of the LMA, JVLAM and LAC in the establishment of a joint vocational doctoral study programme in the arts, and in the development strategies of JVLAM, AAL and LAC. It contributes towards the achievement of objectives and growth priorities of "Smart Specialisation Strategy", emphasizing the importance of arts and culture in the formation of public well-being, integration and education, by creating content for innovations of information and communication technologies, while fostering the competitiveness of students of Latvian higher culture and art education establishments both in Latvia and in the international environment. But to provide as broad and versatile artistic practice opportunities for the students of the study programme, a special four-party cooperation agreement - "On Cooperation in the Implementation of Practice for the Joint Professional Doctoral Study program in Arts Doctoral Students" - has been established (Annex 12_Contracts of Intent of the Employers with Regard to the Provision of Traineeships for Students.pdf). As of now the following agreements have been signed with the Latvian National Opera and Ballet, Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, State Academic Choir "Latvia", Latvian National Museum of Art, Latvian National Theatre; Latvian creative union organizations - Artists' Union of Latvia, Choreographers' Association; the Music and Art Support Foundation, the design studio "H2E", the Art Gallery "Daugava - MS", the New Theatre Institute of Latvia, the film studios "Vides Filmu Studija" and "Studija Lokomotīve", as well as the animation studio "Atom Art" (SAR, p.180). Since the first enrolment in the Joint Professional Doctoral Study programme "Arts" took place in January 2021, the first graduates are expected in early 2024. Currently, in the joint study programme, 42 students are studying in the Latvian language stream, and one student, who is enrolled in JVLMA, is studying in the English language stream.

The economic and social justification of the study program is significant, as Latvia practically has not had notable professional Doctors of Art in arts, and, in accordance with the open sources publicly available, the number of doctoral degree holders in Latvia is 2-2.5 times less than what is needed for the regeneration of researchers, which is one of the main tasks of science policy in the country (<https://www.cfi.lu.lv/par-mums/zinas/zina/t/69764/>). The concern, however, is that the programme is fairly new, with no track record of graduates, and the write-up portion of the dissertation being to lax in its scholastic requirements: during the on-site visit, it was evident that in general less than half a year before graduation, the first graduates still had no solid understanding of the requirements for the write-up were to fill in (could not answer during the visit) and did not know how the evaluation committee was to be organized, which also raises an additional concern that the program becomes virtually another platform for an advanced artistic exploration rather than a rigorous scientific hub.

2.1.5

On 1 April 2018, amendments to the Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Latvia entered into effect[1], amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation on the Classification of Latvian Education have been elaborated[2], as well as Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 617 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education for the Doctoral Degree and the Procedure for Awarding the Vocational Doctoral Degree in Arts",[3] as a result of which the situation has changed and now Latvian institutions of higher education have the opportunity to launch vocational doctoral study programmes in arts (SAR, pp.181-182).

[1] <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/297219-grozijumi-augstskolu-likuma> [2] <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524#piel4>
[3] <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301992>

(All links are in Latvian).

The development of the programme is stipulated in the priorities defined "Long-term Development Strategy of the Art Academy of Latvia", Sub-clause 2.2.3 "Third Level Studies in Art and Design"

states that "an essential part of the modernisation plan of the AAL, which is in line with the Visual Arts Sector Strategy 2014-2020, is the provision of third level studies in art and design" (page 61). The strategy was developed at the time when the AAL, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, was working on a set of proposals for the necessary changes in the legal framework to ensure the possibility of obtaining a vocational doctoral degree in arts in Latvia.

The experience of professional doctorates is visible in the other countries. The professional Doctor's of Arts degree or a similar degree after the completion of a three-cycle art study programme is awarded in several countries that have joined the Bologna Process or the European Higher Education Area. Until April 2018, Latvia was the only Baltic country where it was not possible to continue studies in the field of arts in a professional Doctoral study programme after Bachelor's and Master's studies. With the focus on the three universities, AAL, LAC, and JVLAM, the national professional Doctoral Study programme is a logical step in the field of Arts to collaborate in scientific research, artistic creation, and developing other various projects and in creating new knowledge.

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

The joint professional doctoral study programme "Arts" (JPDS "Arts") fits well within the study field "Arts". Because the programme, since its foundation of AAL, coincided with the establishment of the Latvian state, it has embodied the national school of art and design, its development and research in the framework of art science and cultural theory within the Baltic States and internationally. The aims of the JPDS "Arts" are interrelated with the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme, although the formulation "to organize professional studies meeting cultural, public and societal needs based in artistic creativity and science" are somewhat more general.

The aim, tasks, and results of the three sub-programmes of Joint Professional Doctoral programme in Arts "Arts" are mutually united, because there is an identical study plan, in which only the Arts' areas of the individual study courses (parts B and C) are different and administered by each institution.

The duration and scope of the JPDS "Arts" implementation, as well as the implementation language, are reasonable and justified. While the programme has submitted a student handbook that spells out the procedures and logistics for obtaining the doctoral degree (Handbook for Development and Submission_Profesional DSP.docx), its content could be expanded.

The economic and social justification of the study programme is very sound and indeed necessary for a good functioning of the Latvian society, the concern, however, is that the program at the present configuration is fairly lax in its scholastic requirements, which also raises an additional concern that the programme becomes virtually another platform for an advanced artistic exploration rather than a rigorous scientific hub.

Strengths:

- 1) The programme's compliance with the educational field of "Arts" is upheld by the study modules and course implementation.
- 2) The economic justification of the study programme is supported by the economic and scientific demands on the Baltic States to stay competitive internationally.
- 3) The quality of the study process is ensured by a fairly good organisational structure.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Although the implementation of the joint study programme is justified and follows collaborative practices between the three universities, collaboration is still somewhat segregated.
- 2) The programme has fairly lax scholastic requirements sacrificed for the benefit of the artistic work, in terms of time and effort.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

According to the evidence on the SAR (p. 184) in the process of studying the Academic Joint Doctorate study program – between the Art Academy of Latvia (AAL), the Academy of Music (JVLAM) and the Academy of Culture (LAC) – the student acquires the highest level of academic studies in which specialists are prepared for independent, creative and versatile scientific research work in the aspects of art science and cultural theory

The content of the study program and its courses is clearly defined and designed according to the objectives of the program and its learning outcomes, and correspond to the needs of the labor market, industry, culture area, and scientific trends. The need of the market and the written competences are correlated (SAR, p. 184).

The content of the programs has the following parts:

A1 and A2 (compulsory which provides acquisition of the newest developments in the field of the interdisciplinary study of art and culture, an in-depth acquisition of the connection of philosophical theories and artistic processes that have influenced art in the 20th and 21st centuries) – general education courses,

B (limited choice which provides the doctoral student with high-quality artistic and creative project development skills and develops practical skills in the implementation of unique artistic ideas, improves the doctoral student's skills in the field of artistic activity, develops a highly professional artist's capacity for independent artistic activity in both the Latvian and international creative industries market.,

C (free selection courses of artistic creation work or state-of-the-art studies, implemented in semesters 2, 3, 4 and 5).

Instruction and general educational methods allow a strong student bias. There is an interconnectivity among all study programmes throughout the 3 cooperating academies, which allows flexibility in students to pick up courses easily and without too many obstacles, nevertheless this activity still in its infant stages needs to be exploited and expanded further. The Doctorate study program complies fully with national, international and professional regulations as described in the SAR (pp. 184-193) and it is based on the Florence principles, while adhering to the Higher Education Law and the conditions included in the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. 617 of October 2, 2018, on the professional higher education state standard for obtaining a doctoral degree and the procedure for awarding a professional doctoral degree in Arts.

2.2.2.

The awarding of the Professional Doctoral degree is fully based on the achievements and findings of the chosen topics by the students. The Joint Professional Doctoral study programme in Arts relies on research-based activity with the main goal to promote scientific research and mainly artistic creativity. The Joint Professional Doctoral study programme in Arts promotes the research, popularization, evaluation, and actualization of the fields of humanities and art science and the field of contemporary art and design, allowing students and teachers to participate in the creation of new knowledge. The main task of the Doctorate's programme is to facilitate the development of the Doctorate thesis, providing students with opportunities to develop a thesis on a permanent and sustainable basis, to acquire new theoretical knowledge, to independently research and practically test new forms of expression in artistic practice, to develop the ability to theoretically justify the creative process, to conduct scientific research, to develop communication skills and to prepare graduates for independent professional activity of the highest value and level which would meet cultural, societal and public needs.

During the site visit it also became evident that the whole student community from all 3 levels of education in the AAL enjoy a cross-programme and cross-level teaching and learning experience by

bringing all students together in debates, seminars, workshops and exhibitions. Additionally for this specific Joint Professional Doctoral study programme in Arts, the synergy also extends to all the corresponding students and programs of the 3 collaborating academies.

2.2.3.

Professional doctoral study programme in Arts is implemented with a focus on student-centered education aimed at achieving learning outcomes and study program goals. In this regard, various course/module implementation methods, assessment techniques and strategies are used, which contribute to the achievement of the goals of the study program. The courses of the study program are focused on the effective use of the latest scientific and artistic findings in the works of doctoral students.

Every course document provides teaching methods and methods of assessing students' knowledge and skills. Teaching methods are student-centric and allow a strong student voice. During the site visit, it became evident to the team of experts the balance between theory and practice in the teaching methodology is very satisfactory. Faculty involve students in practical activities, dialogue, and group work. Most lectures are using traditional methods, such as reading theory, asking critical questions, showing examples, giving group or peer work. In the case of the professional doctoral programme the teaching methods are more fluid and rely mostly on the needs of each candidate because of the level and the nature of the programme which is independent research based and relies on the individual artistic production of each student. It was however realized during the visit that there were contradicting and sometimes clashing opinions from faculty and students on issues such as admission, promotion etc.

The teaching methodology also involves teaching and learning through practice and this activity where both faculty and students are simultaneously involved is to be commended.

Additionally for this specific Joint Professional Doctoral study programme in Arts, the synergy also extends to all the corresponding students and programmes of the 3 collaborating academies, where each student is appointed a supervisor from each of the 3 academies and according to the subject field of research.

2.2.4.

According to the SAR (p. 190) in the professional doctoral study program in the arts, Artistic Practice and HEI Traineeship are integrated. These are included to provide students with the opportunity to develop their artistic and academic potential.

The aim of the Artistic Practice is to provide the doctoral student with the acquisition and development of high-quality artistic creative project-making skills and to develop practical skills in the implementation of unique artistic ideas, improve the doctoral student's skills in the field of artistic activity, and develop the capacity of a highly professional artist for independent artistic activity in both the Latvian and international creative industry markets.

The goal of the Artistic Practice is to organize the doctoral student's professional self-realization opportunities, as a result of which the doctoral student accumulates professionally practical experience, as well as promotes the improvement of qualified and creative teachers, deepening the doctoral student's professional skills and abilities by using the theoretical and practical knowledge and insights gained in the professional doctoral study process.

The aim of the HEI Traineeship is to organize the doctoral student's professional and pedagogical self-realization opportunities, resulting in the doctoral student accumulating experience in professional practice and pedagogical activities, and promoting the improvement of qualified and creative teachers by deepening the doctoral student's professional skills and abilities, applying the theoretical and practical knowledge and insights gained in the professional doctoral study process in pedagogy or in other activities related to higher education.

The team of experts realized during the visit that the Academy provides all opportunities to engage students with the local and international creative industries through European projects. Because this is a professional doctoral programme, the direct involvement with the industry also comes in the

form of participation in conferences and publications.

2.2.5.

According to the SAR (p. 192), The Professional Doctoral Study Programme in Arts was developed based on the Florence principles, while adhering to the Higher Education Law and the conditions included in the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. 617 of October 2, 2018, on the professional higher education state standard for obtaining a doctoral degree and the procedure for awarding a professional doctoral degree in arts. Each student has two supervisors - one for the theoretical part and one for the artistically creative work, - and if necessary, work consultants can be invited. The roles and responsibilities of the supervisors are precisely defined. Supervisors focus on ensuring the quality standards of the final work, in accordance with national and international standards.

The acquisition of the Professional Doctoral Study Programme in Arts concludes with state examinations and the awarding of a professional doctoral degree. State examinations are taken:

- 1) by Development and Defence of the Creative Artistic Project during the study process,
- 2) by Development and Defence of the Theoretical Study related to the artistic creation work developed during the study process.

The higher education institution implementing the respective sub-programme forms the state examination commission (hereinafter - the Commission), which evaluates the state examinations and awards the doctoral degree in arts. A separate Commission is formed for each artistic activity field (respectively - each sub-programme). The Commission consists of a chairman, who holds a doctoral degree in arts and leads the work of the Commission, and at least four members of the Commission.

The AAL provides freedom to all professional doctoral candidates to negotiate and choose areas of their interest.

A professional doctoral degree in arts is awarded to a person after completing an accredited professional doctoral study programme in Arts and developing and defending a doctoral theoretical research and artistic creation work.

2.2.6.

At the time of writing the SAR and during the site visit of the team of experts on 19-21 September 2023, there were no graduates from the joint Professional Doctoral program, therefore no final theses were finalized nor presented. But from the discussions during the meetings with faculty and students it became evident that the forthcoming final theses will be relevant to the field and will correspond to the study programme. Currently some examples of research work involves two research projects:

- i) "Cultural Capital as a Resource for Sustainable Development in Latvia" / CARD, (Specifics and development of research methodology of artistic productions and cultural heritage.), and
- ii) "EU4ART_differences", funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 program.

In both projects, close cooperation is being implemented with the Latvian Academy of Culture (LKA) and the Jazeps Vitols Latvian Academy of Music (JVLMA).

Graduation work topics currently being developed and discussed during the visit includes topics such as:

the use of synesthesia effects and abstract animation, addressing emotional aspects of consumer society through fashion,

an information, services, and strategic design project dedicated to the employment of creative individuals,

textile material transformation in interdisciplinary art processes, the use of wandering and narrative methods in fashion design,

the role and problem of realism methods in contemporary sculpture, memory and self-identification issues in Latvian, European, and US art in the 20th and early 21st centuries

problems of expanded painting and its connection with creative and metaphysical issues.

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

The students-centered paradigm is dominating in the study programme construction, realization and development: faculty, students and alumni state positive opinions and also show that the programme fulfills students and labor market needs.

The content of the study programme is topical, and the study courses are interconnected and complementary, corresponding to the objectives of the programme as well as the needs of the industry. The awarding of a degree is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant field of science or artistic creation. The study implementation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme and the approach is student-centered. Students have clearly defined promotion (doctoral thesis defense) opportunities and the topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme as well as to the 3 main disciplines of the three academies involved (art/music/culture).

Strengths:

- 1) Students are quite satisfied with teaching methods, balance of theory and practice.
- 2) Students are free to choose Topics of Final Thesis (paper) and discuss with lectures and practice place experts about its correlation with specialization and study program.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Students and faculty had contradicting opinion on the rules of the DSP admissions, promotion and final submission regulations.

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: Fully compliant

Being a higher research-based program, students on this joint professional doctoral programme work on analysis, hypotheses, experimentation and implementation of research findings and contribute to new knowledge in the respective academic field through artistic production.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

The programme has analogues in the world, but in the Baltic education system, they are the first seeds with certain uncertainties and the bureaucratic side of the programme's implementation that is not fully organized. There is sufficient provision of information for the implementation of the programme, which includes the resources available in the library and the support mechanism of scientific institutes, including cited publications and cooperation with exhibition spaces, for the successful implementation of the practical part in an amount and quality appropriate for the doctoral level. The material and technical provision, including the individual workshops of doctoral students, is adequate for the implementation of the programme. Appropriate financial security for the implementation of the programme, which creates prerequisites for achieving study results.

2.3.2.

In the implementation of the Joint professional doctoral study programme, cooperation with other scientific institutions and universities (good examples of cooperation with partner institutions and sharing resources, SAR, pages 181-183), as well as individually recruited professors in art

universities of other countries (joint research, projects, scientific publications, conferences, etc.) is excellent. The programme implemented by AAL fully complies with the conditions for the implementation of the professional doctoral study programme in art, ensuring the actualization of the practical performance of visual arts at the research level in the region.

2.3.3.

The study costs of the art practical doctoral study program per student are proportionate, which are covered by the state, AAL provides doctoral students with separate costs of the realization of their doctoral work, within the limits of possibilities. The funding available for the professional doctoral study programme in art is adequate, but could be higher, giving the opportunity to pay the material costs related to the practical part of the doctoral work and giving the opportunity for doctoral students to widely exhibit their research-practical work topic internationally during their studies. In general, the professional doctoral study programme in Arts has an appropriate number of doctoral students (43) (SAR, page 7), and the implementation of the programme, the cooperation of doctoral students and supervisors, will lead to expectations and successfully defended doctoral theses.

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

The implementation of the professional doctoral study process in Art at AAL is a logical continuation of the master's degree in art, ensuring the continuation of education at the highest level, confirming one's place and role as a practicing artist in the creation of the content of the cultural space and the development of thought. For the implementation of the programme, scientific and practical support and sufficient information exchange in the implementation of the programme are required. The material and technical provision and infrastructure for the implementation of the programme is excellent, which is also based on cooperation between institutions, where the result of practical work will be presented. AAL's existing resources and provision guarantee a high-quality content realization program, ensuring its sustainability and significant development for the Latvian economy, which is happening for the first time. The meeting with doctoral students and teachers convinced about the place and importance of a successful programme, as well as the seen examples of the doctoral work process confirm that the results of the theoretical and practical part of the work can quantitatively and qualitatively correspond to the doctoral degree in art.

Strengths:

- 1) Highly qualified academic staff (doctorate professors for the theoretical part and professors for the practical part).
- 2) AAL's infrastructure, research and practical work premises are arranged for conducting research and practical work.
- 3) In the implementation of the study process, there is internal cooperation at all AAL levels between departments and institutes, and good international cooperation and cooperation of program implementers.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The structure and evaluation criteria for obtaining a doctoral degree must be improved.

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

Although study programme practical part is fully covered and sufficient, the theoretical part for the PhD's is weaker and needs more attention. This aspect is not sufficient to diminish the evaluation as partially compliant. Experts are taking into account the fact that this is a new study programme.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

There is appropriate scientific support for the implementation of the art practical doctoral level study process (highly qualified specialists, professors with a doctorate degree for the scientific part and professors of the practical part are involved in providing the study program). In addition to the teaching staff employed at LAA, the programme also includes visiting lecturers. Their ratio is 2:1 (10 internal and 5 external) in the theoretical part, and 2,5:1 (10 internal and 4 external) in the practical part. It should be pointed out that they also provide teaching staff with the necessary academic qualifications for artistic projects, as 5 higher educational teachers hold doctoral degrees, of which 3 have scientific doctoral degree and 2 have a professional doctoral degree. There is no presentation of the teaching staff at the study programme on the website. Therefore, there are no clear visible research-based, scientific and professional publications that the teaching staff must fulfill under the requirements and for the purpose of higher educational teaching. However, it is evident from the attached documents of the employees' CVs that they fully follow the requirements of the published peer-reviewed editions and research work. For better recognition of each member of the academic staff and transparency of data on the teaching staff, experts suggest that the AAL website contains a brief presentation of each member of academic staff and an indication of the most relevant achievements in the last period. But data in CV documents of the teaching staff shows that high profile publishing achievements are evident in each document, and little less outstanding artistic achievements.

2.4.2.

The study programme is relatively new and also introduces a specific balance between teaching staff on theoretical and practical work, as the regulatory requirements are slightly different. It is necessary to emphasize that they are aware of the specific nature of the programme, which requires the teaching staff to be balanced with the artistic, scientific and academic requirements for the quality implementation of the doctoral study programme. It is clear from the reviewed CVs of the teaching staff that it is a relatively young composition with a short academic career, so it would be expedient to provide a system that would ensure a satisfactory composition of the teaching staff even in unforeseen circumstances and in the long-term plans. In the SAR it is indicated that in the study programme AAL divided the theoretical research and development of the artistic projects in which the ratio of the teaching staff is 15:14 in all of 27 included teaching staff members. For quality program development, teaching staff should be encouraged to simultaneously cover theoretical as well as artistic research projects.

2.4.3.

Teaching staff have experience in scientific areas that respects specifics of the study programme. The academic staff was integrated within two research projects, namely 'Cultural Capital as a Resource for the Sustainable Development of Latvia', which was carried out between 2020 and 2022, and 'EU4ART_differences' in 2020. It is noticeable that they are involved in scientific research projects and that they do not have artistic research projects specific to the study programme. According to the specifics of the programme, in the short-term plans, they should start developing artistic research projects that would achieve academic excellence and at the same time be included in the implementation of the professional doctoral study programme.

2.4.4.

The academic staff implementing the doctoral study programme has a record of scientific and research excellence. In the last six years they have published in peer-reviewed editions, including international editions. There is no presentation of the teaching staff at the study programme on the website. Therefore, there are no clear visible research-based, scientific and professional publications nor artistic achievements that the teaching staff must fulfill under the requirements and for the purpose of quality higher educational teaching. However, it is evident from the attached documents of the employees' CVs that they fully follow the requirements for scientific excellence, however, there is a lack of data on artistic achievements.

2.4.5.

Three higher education institutions in Latvia participate in the implementation of the study programme. A system of mutual cooperation has been established, but it has room for improvements. Currently, some joint lectures are being held, but the teaching staff does not cooperate with each other on particular courses as well as on joint research, scientific and artistic projects. There is insufficient emphasis on the interconnection of the study courses, although the programme enables this precisely because of the involvement of three different higher education institutions, each with its one specific study field.

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

The new professional doctoral study programme enables academic advancement in the field of art and as such has filled the gap that education in the field of art had. In addition, it is a programme in the implementation of which three higher education institutions in Latvia are involved, thus bringing added value to everyone involved in the programme, especially teaching staff. For teaching staff, this can be an opportunity for their professional development, both in joint artistic achievements and research projects.

Strengths:

- 1) Given that they are the first Professional doctoral study programme in Latvia, they have the opportunity to set requirements for achieving excellence in specific joint science and artistic achievements of the teaching staff.
- 2) The fact that three different higher education institutions are included in the programme enables a more intense and more competitive environment for the quality scientific and artistic development of the teaching staff.
- 3) Highly qualified academic staff (doctorate professors for the theoretical part and professors for the practical part).

Weaknesses:

- 1) Habilitation criteria specific to this field are not developed. The joint practical doctoral programme equally covers excellence in artistic creations supported by scientific research. In general at the moment there is less emphasis on artistic achievements.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff of the joint professional doctoral study programme clearly have respectable research references, due to which they fully meet the requirements in the regulatory

documents, however it would be advisable to supplement them with achievements in academic-artistic fields in the future.

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 has been evaluated in accordance with Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 617. Study programme fulfills all requirements regarding the study courses, their content, contact hours and programme volume.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme is being implemented in Latvian and English languages. Study course descriptions are available in Latvian and English language and comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1 , Paragraph two and Section 56.2 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Diploma supplement does not have any indication about when the joint study programme was created among partner institutions. Also diploma supplement is not corresponding to the Cabinet of Minister regulations No. 202.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

AAL has provided confirmation that teaching staff 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. See annex. LMA_AIC_valoda_ENG.

- 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

AAL has provided confirmation that teaching staff members have sufficient level of English language to conduct studies. Annex 9_pielikums_macibspēku_saraksts.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study agreement sample provided complies with the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 70. and are included in the agreement.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Academy has provided confirmation that students will be able to continue their studies in Estonian Academy of Music and Theater.

- 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

The AAL 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 and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme. See Annex LMA_AIC_Zaudejumu_kompensacija

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: Fully compliant

Study programme has been created among other HEI that have been accredited. Programme complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Diploma supplement needs adjustments to meet legislation requirements. If diploma has been corrected this criteria can be considered as fully compliant.

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

Overall the requirements corresponding to the Joint Professional Doctoral study programme in Arts are fulfilled and this study programme runs with good structure and content, supported by a strong pool of academic staff, technicians, administration and physical resources in diverse areas from traditional wood and stone processes to high end technologies - through visual arts to music and culture - run by the three prestigious academies of Latvia. Jazeps Vitols Latvian Academy of Music, The Latvian Academy of Culture and Art Academy of Latvia. The 3 academies have managed to create a positive synergy in the delivery of this Joint Professional Doctoral study programme in Arts which borrows best practices from each individual academy and delivers collectively new scholars at higher research level. The final consensus on the rating for this programme is Good since it is believed by the team of experts that there is room for improvement in all aspects.

Evaluation of the study programme "The professional doctoral study programme in Arts "Arts"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "The professional doctoral study programme in Arts "Arts"

Short-term recommendations

1) In the handbook it is necessary to determine the standards of the artistic presentation for the needs of the completion of the doctoral thesis, which will be adequately comparable to the standards for the publication of a scientific paper, which must be published in a peer-reviewed indexed journal (e.g. opinions of curators with specific references in the field of doctoral thesis, the list of reference galleries and museums, list of biennials ect.).

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|---|
| 2) Standardize the write up portion/ supplement requirements to the chief artistic inquiry to have a more uniform page/word count across all universities to improve their scientific validity in publishing. |
| 3) Develop a document with guidelines which thoroughly describe admission, promotion and final submission regulations. |
| 4) Improve the collaborative practices amongst the three universities, to minimize segregation in research and creative activities. |
| 5) Harmonise further enrolment criteria among all partner institutions. |

Long-term recommendations

- | |
|--|
| 1) An emphasis on the implementation of a good balance between the practical and theoretical parts of the study programme to be further defined so that to ensure the main philosophy of any doctorate programme that needs to provide new knowledge in research. |
| 2) It is recommended that the research projects be developed that will link artistic and scientific activities in a specific research way, as these projects currently rely too much on standard scientific methodologies and approaches. For this purpose it would be necessary to strengthen research within the framework of the proposed research project. More researchers who reach comparable standards with scientific achievements in the artistic field should be included in the research projects. |
| 3) The group of experts suggests for consideration that, given the specificity of the study programme, habilitation criteria specific to this field should be developed. Habilitation criteria should consider equivalent artistic and scientific achievements. |
| 4) Regardless of being professional PhD programme Academy can not allow to sacrifice research activities in favor of artistic creation. The criteria for filling in theoretical part for the thesis needs adjustment and become more substantial so that research complements the artistic production. |

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	A study quality assurance system has been established and is being implemented at the Academy, but it does not take place in a systematic way, and some of its elements are not fully implemented or are not formally processed, as this became evident in the various meetings that took place during the site visit 19-21 September 2023.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)	Fully compliant		The level of development of scientific research and artistic creation in some cases highly exceeds standard norms, especially compared with the level of technical infrastructure, research resources and the number of researchers, all that is necessary for quality research work. The research institutes are well developed and embedded in the Latvian and research community abroad.
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.	Fully compliant		The collaborations established through the development of joint master's programme and professional doctorate programme contribute to the achievement and more successful development of the aims of the study programmes. International and national corporations enable stable development not only of the programmes but also of research and art quality outcomes within the study field.

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.	Fully compliant			All the recommendations made by the previous team of experts during the accreditation process in 2011 were met and implemented by AAL. SAR (p. 76) as well as for the "Joint Doctoral Study Programme in the Arts" (report of the expert group on licensing of the study programme on 25 September 2020). Since the period of time since the licensing of the last 2 study programmes was quite short, recommendations are still in process and in progress and this has been verified during the site visit.

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	Art (43211)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good
2	Art (45211)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good
3	Joint academic master's degree study programme "Service design strategies and innovations" (45214)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good
4	Art (51211)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
5	The professional doctoral study programme in Arts "Arts" (51211/14)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

There is no dissenting opinions of the experts.