Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: RISEBA University of Applied Sciences

Study field: Architecture and Construction

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

Overall the experts assess positively the efforts by RISEBA to establish and develop a study field of architecture. They see it a great challenge but also an opportunity to diversify the market offering of architecture education in Latvia, which has been previously dominated by a single public sector HEI. Introducing a much stronger international focus, more engagement with the discipline and the general public beyond insular academic dissemination, as well as bringing together knowledge from the fields of media arts and business can, in theory, produce an attractive study field with programs that can add value to the existing offering of architecture education in Latvia. At the same time, RISEBA is a private institution with limited access to a supplementary public sector funding. This leads to higher tuition fees and no state funded study places, which can deter the potential pool of applicants. This is especially an issue when compared to other English speaking master programmes in the European Union, which may cost much less and offer more resources, and more access to diverse teaching staff. Therefore, the experts see it an open challenge for the particular study field to cement its place in the current educational landscape, and develop its own competitive advantages to become an even more sought-after offering.

Among the positive aspects could be noted the strong focus of internationalization and exchange of ideas and knowledge about architecture that spans far beyond the context of Latvia. The high degree of involvement of the international staff seems to have brought a lot of quality to the results of the study programmes. Moreover, the dissemination of study outcomes to the broader public, nationally and internationally, has established a tradition that was mostly nonexistent before in Latvia. With the series of regular publications, thesis exhibitions, and public lecture series (Slice of Architecture), the study field has opened up the disciplinary discussion to a much broader audience, as well as contributed to the development of the study culture within the study field. At the same time, it is important to align international partnerships with institutions to the needs of the study field, and hence to avoid convenience and past agreements to guide these decisions.

Second, it is also important to note the overall quality of design exploration among student work. While experts have noted on several occasions that the professionalized nature of thesis project delivery seem to significantly limit the means of artistic expression, in the overall perspective of architecture education in Latvia, the study programmes, especially the bachelor one, is considered to produce architects with high design skills. This was exemplified by the range of media the students used to make their work. Paradoxically, a range of different materials and techniques, such as casting and metal welding have been used, despite the absence of a sufficient model workshop. All of this alludes to a good design culture that is gradually emerging in the study field.

Third, the experts acknowledge the presence of other study fields that are related in their content within RISEBA. While some minor integration has been observed, the experts acknowledge that there is a significant potential in further collaborations between study programmes, both business and especially media arts. As digital media, virtual reality, and moving images in general become indispensable means of communication in today's world, there are many ways architecture can engage with these fields, and RISEBA has it all under the same roof.

Fourth, the experts noted a prevalence of informal atmosphere in the study field. This allows direct, non-hierarchical communication between the management of the study field, the teaching staff, and the students. It came up several times during the evaluation process that matters can be resolved quickly, sometimes more quick than the prescribed procedures suggest. At the same time, it is

important to acknowledge that informality is a "double edged sword", and lack of a prescribed and transparent policy can lead to negative effects when it comes to administrative matters, staffing, attraction of foreign staff, and others.

Among the negatives, the most notable is the implementation of the master programme. In qualitative terms, it does not function as a full time professional masters programme in architecture, as its course schedule and the actual realities of implementation suggest more a vocational add-on course that is supposed to accommodate students' full time employment, or their individual business ventures in running architecture offices. These observations were corroborated by the students, graduates, and employers. Moreover, some ambiguity exists in terms of admission requirements to the programme, as it appears that the current criteria permits people without a bachelor in architecture to be admitted to the master programme. Altogether, in experts' assessment this situation makes the quality of the masters programme questionable, and calls for urgent revisions.

The other major negative in the study field is the lack of care by the HEI for the teaching staff of the study field. In experts' view, this unfolds along several dimensions. While it is understandable that certain financial limitations prohibit the election of more permanent staff, it was noted during the visit that staff also are not even assigned permanent workspaces or issued technical equipment to carry out their work tasks. Furthermore, interviews with staff revealed a lack of pedagogical development training that would be specific to the study field, rather than general knowledge. Moreover, the staff are not clearly informed about their workload division, and this division is not followed in planning the study activities. Lastly, there is virtually no outgoing staff mobility, which limits their professional development possibilities.

The third negative is the provision of resources, which is lacking in some areas. The experts acknowledge that architecture is a relatively expensive study field to implement, and therefore substantial investment has been needed by RISEBA. However, experts also conclude that the program needs further investment to raise its quality and become more competitive in the international marketspace. Most notably the library resources specific to the particular study field are high quality, but in an extremely low volume. Likewise, the open space arrangement is very positive to instigate creativity and informal communication among the staff and students. At the same time, teaching staff lack any designated workspaces, and the number of seminar rooms seems limited. The same observations are echoed when looking at the model workshop, which is insufficiently equipped and sized for the study field.

Fourth, the experts have indicated that the teaching staff and students' involvement in scientific research is moderate. Previously, the international evaluation of the activities of scientific institutions of the Ministry of Education and Science and Technopolis Group Eesti has granted the RISEBA with only 1 point, indicating a low research performance level at the RISEBA. The RISEBA has developed mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research through the RISEBA Scientific Committee and different regulations deriving from it, where academic work at RISEBA, besides pedagogical work, includes research projects, organizational work, and scientific work (research) financed from the University funding, however experts have identified the shortcomings preventing scientific activities in HEI - low outgoing mobility of teaching staff, insufficient resources for carrying out the research (no permanent working places for teaching staff), the workload division between the three main areas (teaching, research, administrative work) is not clearly defined at the level of the study field, or at least it is not communicated clearly to the staff. Research papers are published mainly locally or in mainstream design magazines thus lacking international outlook and assessment.

With all that being said, the experts consider that all of the above mentioned shortcomings can be ameliorated by the management of HEI and the study field. Moreover, experts see a potential in further developing the study field and its study programmes in order to differentiate themselves further from the competition, and perhaps filling out other, untapped opportunities, such as a part time programme integrated with a professional internship, or the much closer synergies with the media arts program leading to a much stronger emphasis on media and film in the architecture curriculum.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1. RISEBA has defined the ambitious vision of an innovative approach, which includes the interdisciplinary approach, where entrepreneurship meets art and serves as a platform for the exchange of contracts for professionals of business and creative industries. As the strategy "Latvia 2030" emphasizes the importance of innovative entrepreneurship, role of school as the center of social networking and creativity as one of the nation's main values and driving forces, RISEBA's vision is fully compliant with the development trends of the society and national economy. RISEBA has developed 5 study fields - "Economics", "Management, Administration and Real Estate Management", "Information and Communication Sciences", "Architecture and Construction", "Arts" with 24 study programmes (SAR 1.1.). Architecture as one of creative industries has its logical place in this pallette. Aims of study programme "Architecture" (43581, 47581) are set in SAR 3.1.2. of both programmes - to acquire the basic skills and competencies required for work in the profession of an architect and planner. Academically-professional objectives of the master study programme underline competitiveness, individuality, interaction with the economic environment. Composition of the both study programmes create a set of skills and knowledge necessary for professional practice of the architect.

During the discussion panel both students and graduates have expressed their willingness to work as independent architects - entrepreneurs thus representing the slogan of RISEBA "Where business meets arts". Still keeping to encourage the students to work for the reaching goal - architect's own independent practice - HEI and faculty should pay more attention to create the understanding that architect's professional practice is a discipline and profession at first, not "business as usual" but lifelong self-development process to be able to create with responsibility the built environment that corresponds needs of users and whole society. Therefore independent practice of the architect should be started only when a certain level of maturity has been reached.

Having wide opportunities to collaborate within HEI between study fields "Architecture and Construction" and other 4 fields previously mentioned, RISEBA still lacks the internal capacity to provide engineering study courses which is one of the crucial skills of the architect. It is recommended to establish some clearly defined cooperation e.g. with other HEI who have a strong engineering background. Analyzing the list of study courses of various study programmes within RISEBA a weak collaboration can be found. This can be indicated as an unused opportunity and should be developed.

1.1.2. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the study field are analyzed in SAR 2.1.2. Diagnostics of both internal and external conditions are provided assessing various criterias to give the complex evaluation of the study field quality. As the main strengths are highlighted the

international teaching staff, individual approach to study process and good provision of material resources. Main weaknesses - lack of high-quality local teaching staff, overall economic and demographic aspects. Self-assessed SWOT analysis mostly corresponds to the findings of the accreditation expert group but some of self-assessed strengths do not match to expert conclusions. HEI has assessed the scientific and research activity of teaching staff as high, however expert opinion (see 1.4. of expert opinion) and previous official studies indicate lack of research activity. HEI has assessed its study base and infrastructure as good, but expert opinion points out some shortcomings such as lack of proper premises for theoretical classes and insufficient space for the modeling workshop. The development direction of the study field (SAR Annex 3) corresponds to aspects assessed in SWOT analysis demonstrating that HEI has a clear understanding of objectives and means to continue to develop the study field as a high-quality choice for both local and international students. Aspects as "Improvement and development of bachelor's and master's programs in the "Architecture and Construction" study field", "Scientific - research and artistic staff of the academic staff creative work and Development", "Material and technical Development of the study field", "Cooperation with employers and graduates" are analyzed specifying action plan, deadlines, responsible persons and results to measure.

1.1.3. During site visits in all the discussion panels a strong willingness of development and innovation was expressed by both HEI and study programme management. An effective way of decision making was emphasized - mostly highly appreciating informal ways of communication without official bureaucracy. Higher management of the HEI has demonstrated a supportive and interested attitude to the needs of the study programme.

1.1.4. There is a comprehensive set of policies and documents developed for the admission of students, for the recognition of the study period, professional experience, prior formal and non-formal education and for the assessment of students' achievements and learning outcomes - internal regulations "Admission requirements", "Rules for the Recognition of Study Results Achieved during Previous Education or Professional Experience", "Preparation of Study Course Comparison Protocol and Individual Study Plan". Regulations are well prepared and clearly define general requirements, procedures and methods of recognition. Regulations can be successfully applied for study programs of non-regulated professions.
However the regulation "Admission requirements" Appendix #10 p.8 sets out the requirements for previous education as "Academic or professional undergraduate degree in architecture or an equal area." This requirement has to be immediately updated to ensure that only persons holding bachelor degree in architecture are admitted to masters programme to fulfill the requirement of the Law on regulated professions and recognition of professional qualifications and Directive 2005/36/EC - Article 46:

"1. Training as an architect shall comprise:
(a)
a total of at least five years of full-time study at a university or a comparable teaching institution, leading to successful completion of a university-level examination; or
(b)
not less than four years of full-time study at a university or a comparable teaching institution leading to successful completion of a university-level examination, accompanied by a certificate attesting to the completion of two years of professional traineeship in accordance with paragraph 4.
2. Architecture must be the principal component of the study referred to in paragraph 1."

Documents provided by RISEBA - "Master Study Program Qualification_RFI No. 5_26.08.2022" - show that all students with non-architectural bachelor degree come from one particular HEI, VIA University

College, Denmark, and hold the bachelor degree of Architecture Technology and Construction Management. It must be noted that BA of Architecture Technology and Construction Managemen is not considered as valid education to admit for master studies in architecture in both Kunstakademiets Arkitektskole i København and Arkitektskolen i Århus, notified in Directive 2005/36/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the recognition of professional qualifications. Architecure Technology and Construction Management study program is not the architecture study programme and is not a part of the architect education.

Sources: https://royaldanishacademy.com/procedure-ma-architecture

https://aarch.dk/en/master-admission/#toggle-id-3

RISEBA has provided protocols of the assessment of previous education (Riga Building college and VIA University college, Denmark) and individual study plans of 2 students. Protocols show no evidence of comparing the content of the study courses. Individual study plans are limited to 7 study courses (14 credit points). As architectural tehnologist is a different profession with different professional tasks study courses might be thought with different approach and different methods as for an architect. In the light of the above, there are reasonable grounds to believe that persons admitted to a master's study programme without an appropriate bachelor's education have obtained an education not in compliance with requirement of the Law on regulated professions and recognition of professional qualifications and Directive 2005/36/EC - Article 46.

"Master Study Program Qualification_RFI No. 5_26.08.2022" and protocol of the assessment of previous education (Riga Building college) and individual study plan of the student show that graduates from Riga Building college (1st level professional higher education, Architetural assistant) are admitted to 3rd study year. Protocols show no evidence of comparing the content of the study courses. Individual study plans are limited to 5 study courses (10 credit points). As architectural assistant is a different profession with different professional tasks study courses might be thought with different approach and different methods as for an architect, so the graduates of the Riga Building college are not familiar with architectural design process methods and values.

To not compromise the basic values of architect's profession the clear procedure has to be set to ensure that persons who benefit from recognition of study results achieved during previous education or professional experience are not exempted from design study courses or any other essential professional courses.

1.1.5. SAR 2.1.5. describes clearly defined methods, principles and procedures for assessing achievements of students, but there can not be publicly found an internal document of HEI stating the same so that students could get acquainted with the principles of assessment. However, the description of each study course outlines the assessment principles and structure, and during the site visit students have assured that they get the feedback on their study work and understand the assessment.

1.1.6. Compliance with academic fairness principles is governed by the Academic Fairness Code, Plagiarism Regulation and the Code of Ethics developed by RISEBA. During the discussion panel with teaching staff it was clear that the teaching staff of the study field is not familiar with Code previously mentioned and do not apply this in practice. However students have assured that the development of their study work is constantly supervised thus making plagiarism impossible.

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

RISEBA has formulated the ambitious vision which fully complies with the state-determined development strategy where the study field "Architecture and construction" has its logical place. Set of 24 study programmes creates a great opportunity to cooperate between programmes to fulfill the

spirit of the RISEBA slogan. There is a strong communication and understanding between HEI and study field administration. Study field administration has a mostly realistic view on strengths and weaknesses of the study field and has a corresponding development plan to enhance strengths and overcome weaknesses. HEI has defined a detailed regulation so persons with previous study or work experience could benefit from their achievements and qualifications; however it has to be strongly monitored that this is not used to compromise the fundamentals of the regulated profession of an architect.

Strengths:
1.Wide range of study programmes with possibility to cooperate.
2. Supporting and understanding relationship between university highest level, middle level and study field management.
3. Individual approach to design an individual study track for those with previous higher education experience.

Weaknesses
1. Tendency to undermine the principles of the regulated profession of an architect through loose admission requirements and an overall focus on business values.
2. Staff and students are not always familiar with requirements, procedures and preferences set out in policies and relevant documents, e.g. staff and students during site visits have demonstrated a kind of surprise by mentioning Plagiarism regulation.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1. RISEBA University has managed to implement an effective quality policy which as stated on the onsite visit is the most complex quality system of management in Latvia. The quality policy is accessible on the SAR p. 30 where there is a link provided to the document under the name of "RISEBA quality policy" as well as the quality policy is easy to be found on the RISEBA website - https://www.riseba.lv/en/about-riseba/quality-assurance On the website it is accesible on the same page as links to "Procedure for Examination of Complaints and Proposals", "Complaint and Proposal form" and information "Where to send a complaint form?".

Within the SAR p. 31 there is an outlined quality management system of the academic direction in the Figure 2.1 with underneath described key performance criteria on the SAR pp.31-35. These key performance criteria are closely related to aims and learning outcomes of the study field and study programmes as they ensure development, improvement tools of the overall quality. The performance criteria are divided in 3 parts: 1. Programme management and content; 2. Programme implementation; 3. Programme results. For example, it includes such criteria as development and implementation of the study programme, drafting course descriptions, complaints and proposals of students, mobility of students, external quality assessment. As indicated during onsite visits, the main indicators of the study quality is the feedback received from students through surveys and the number of complaints and/or suggestions received that shows that there is a necessity to improve certain aspects, study courses, or, for example, to change a specific lecturer.

Regarding quality assurance mechanisms, RISEBA has established a wide range of regulations, descriptively outlined procedures in place for each and every aspect of question for example - "Surveying procedure", "Internship Regulation", "Code of Ethics", "Regulation on plagiarism". The existence of various kinds of these documents provide a solid basis from which the study field and study programme processes can be successfully provided and governed.

1.2.2. During on-site visits, responsible persons of internal quality assurance maintenance, were questioned regarding the various existing surveys of the stakeholders (students, graduates, employers). All the surveys and their examples are outlined in a "Surveying procedure" document that is accessible in SAR p.34. According to the information gathered on the onsite visit and that is written in this document, RISEBA has implemented the following forms of surveys: 1. Annual student surveys that include general questions of the study quality and processes; 2. Employer survey; 3. Alumni/graduate survey; 4. Assessment questionnaire of a study course; 5. Assessment questionnaire of a study programme; 6. Assessment questionnaire of thesis writing process; 7. Internship company survey. All of the questionnaire examples are also available in the aforementioned document in place. During the onsite visit, students outlined that they receive links to surveys to their student email where they can easily click on the link and access the survey and fill it. Students confirmed that they receive two types of surveys - those of the study courses after the end of the study course and once per study year the annual survey. During the meeting with graduates, they outlined that they received the survey after graduation to fill out the whole study process. Employers pointed out they have employed some of RISEBA students in their offices but not as many students as the graduates thus, it was quite unclear which are the parties that get involved in the employer survey. Regarding internship surveys, students outlined that they have to present the university internship company survey after finishing the internship that evaluates their performance, skills acquired and other qualities. When asked the teaching staff during the expert visit, they indicated that there are no academic/teaching staff surveys in place at this moment.

When asked during an onsite visit of the activity of the students to fill out the surveys, the answer was rather broad - 20 to 80% depending on the study course, although, as pointed out by the responsible parties, filling out the surveys is mandatory. One of the persons involved in the quality assurance provision, clarified that in order to ensure that every student fills out the survey, they plan to implement an internal system which would pop up the survey when students log in the portal with a reminder that it has to be completed.

1.2.3. RISEBA has established a mechanism of submission of student complaints and proposals. As mentioned in 1.2.1., it is accessible on the homepage of the university. There are 2 existing sections on the home page regarding complaints and proposals: 1. Procedure for Examination of Suggestions and Proposals and 2. Complaint/Proposal form. The form can be accessed here: https://www.riseba.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/PR0008-02_Annex2_Procedure%20for%20Examina tion%20of%20Complaints%20and%20Proposals.pdf while the homepage is here: https://www.riseba.lv/en/about-riseba/quality-assurance. The official complaint and proposal form requests for student name and surname that is filling the complaint, email, study programme of the student filling the form. Then students can choose whether they wish to submit a complaint or a proposal and further have 4 subsections with free space to write down the necessary information. 1. Content of the complaint/proposal; 2. Previous solution of the complaint (only in case of a complaint); 3. Preferable solution of the complaint (only in case of a complaint); 4. Some additional documents added to the form - YES/NO, that is followed by a signature and date.

Within the mechanism of complaints and proposals, there are 3 stages in place: 1. Informal complaint reviewal (solved immediately); 2. Formal complaint if it was not possible to resolve informally (review within up to 30 days); 3. Preparation of a decision by a higher decision body within the university (up to 30 days) in case a student wishes to appeal the decision made. All of this information is outlined in detail within the document of "RISEBA Complaint and proposal review procedure" that is available on SAR p.42.

When asked to the students whether they are aware of such a mechanism in place, students

indicated that they know of it and are informed. During onsite visit, it became clear that this procedure is not widely used as the parties both university and students give a preference to negotiations beforehand. Students feel comfortable to come forward with the issue/problem that has arisen either to the lecturer directly if it regards a specific study course or to the study programme director. In various cases, issues have been resolved through communication without need to use the mechanism. One of the students mentioned that they had a problem with a lecturer that no student was fond of as it was hard to understand the topic and the way the lectures were provided was chaotic. After negotiations with the study director, they came to a solution of the problem and the lecturer was not giving lectures anymore in the further study courses of the semester. As also numbers show in the SAR p.42, in the reporting period of 2016/2020, there have been only one complaint officially received out of 120 that is related specifically towards Architecture.

1.2.4. According to the information gathered, it is clear that RISEBA has implemented a mechanism for the purpose of compiling various types of statistical data such as number of students, number of admitted students to the university and in specific study programmes per study year, number of unregistered students, number of exchange students, total number of personnel working in RISEBA, number of complaints received and other forms of data. All of the data acquired helps to improve the quality of the study field as well as the study programmes and includes within the assessment mechanism most important stakeholders - students, graduates and employers. During onsite visit, the expert group asked regarding the feedback provision of the survey and data results to the stakeholders as well as the summary of results compiled. One of the HEI management answered that such data exists but it is not published anywhere for the stakeholders to access nor sent after the compiling of the results which raises a question if such feedback mechanism to stakeholders exist at all. Either way, the existing mechanism is clearly centered towards the improvement of the study quality in both study field and study programmes.

1.2.5. RISEBA has its official website which is available here: https://www.riseba.lv/. The website includes all the necessary information for students, lecturers, potential students and other interested parties. It includes an outlook for the interested potential students of all of the study programmes in the study field of Architecture and Construction. The information is provided both in Latvian and English and can be accessed here:
1. Bachelor's study programme in Architecture - https://www.riseba.lv/en/students/undergraduate-studies/architecture
2. Professional Master's study programme in Architecture - https://www.riseba.lv/en/students/postgraduate-studies/architecture
There is also information available on VIIS official register and the provided information is in correspondence with the information provided on the website and E-platform. There is accessible information on both of the study programmes implemented within the study field. It can be accessed here on both of the study programmes: https://www.viis.gov.lv/registri/izglitibas_programmas when searched for RISEBA, study field of Architecture and Construction and accordingly "Architecture" study programme.

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

RISEBA has established a well-functioning quality–assurance system that is effective.There is a quality policy that is accessible on the website of the university. Student surveys are conducted regularly and student suggestions and recommendations are taken into account. Students, graduates and employers all are involved in quality assurance while teaching staff is expected to be involved more. Information regarding study courses and study programmes offered and detailed description is accessible on the website of RISEBA. There is a complaint/suggestion system in place

where students can express their concerns or problems freely, although the complaint system electronically was unable to be accessed. Student suggestions are taken into consideration and changes are implemented accordingly.

Overall, there are some existing general weak links within the internal quality system that have to be eliminated and improved over the time. For example, no academic staff surveys (advisable but not mandatory according to the perquisites), employer survey feedback mechanism - not clear who is participating, who is involved and how feedback is given, and other things which are counter related to other crucial aspects relevant to a successful work of the university. To mentioned a few - admission requirements that have to be updated and the study programmes do not comply with requirements in Directive seems to indicate deficiencies in monitoring. However, the expert group believes that the latter are not related to the question of effectiveness of the internal quality assurance but more to the business model of the university. As far as the improvements are made and according to what has been seen on site during the visit, the internal quality assurance system is well- functioning and in place.

Strengths:
1. Student, graduate, and employers surveys are conducted regularly;
2. Complaint and suggestion mechanism is in place;
3.Information regarding study courses and study programmes offered and detailed description is accessible on the website;
4. Student suggestions/ complaints are solved and taken into consideration.

Weaknesses:
1. Lack of involvement of the teaching staff in quality assurance processes;
2. No feedback/summary to the stakeholders of the survey results.

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: Fully compliant

   Overall, the university has established a well - working quality assurance system, although there are minor things that lack feedback to the students, graduates and employers of the survey results and teaching staff monitoring mechanism.

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   RISEBA has established a quality policy that is publicly available - https://www.riseba.lv/en/about-riseba/quality-assurance and various procedures as surveys of stakeholders for quality check purposes.

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 mechanism in place of development and internal approval of the study programmes.

There are various regulations in place of the procedure - 1."Regulations on developing and amending and terminating study programmes";
2. Compliance of the study programme with "Study regulations";
3. "Updating process for study course descriptions"

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

According to the "Updating process for course description" document, the course descriptions are made available in the Moodle system. The academic staff should inform students about the course description, expected academic results and assessment criteria during the first class.

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

RISEBA follows the procedure of re-election of the academic staff every 6 years in open competition. The procedure takes place according to the Law on Higher Education. There are internal regulations in place that outline the procedure as well - "Regulation on election to academic positions" and "Academic personnel policy." These documents are accessible on SAR p.33.
There are in place surveys of study courses which evaluate the quality of the lecturers performance. While there are no surveys of teaching staff to monitor their own assessment of performance and well-being. development.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Surveys of students, alumni, and employers are organized every year as well as study course surveys after every course.

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

Overall, RISEBA is working on various crucial quality assessment tools and criteria that are implemented within the processes of the university systems. Although, there seems to be missing the feedback to the involved stakeholders which would provide the completeness of the exchange of information. There is a lack of involvement of lecturers and monitoring of their well-being and performance.
As it is not a mandatory requirement to involve lecturers, expert group do not see as a negative aspect but rather recommends to possibly involve the teaching staff more in the process of internal quality assurance.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1 The HEI is funded predominantly by tuition fees which make over 80% of its income as indicated in SAR chapter 2.3. Additionally, it generates revenue by taking part in procurements and other projects, as well as leasing out its premises. Furthermore, SAR chapter 2.3 and the experts meeting with the management suggests that RISEBA has a system in place for determining and redistributing the financial support required for the implementation of the study field and the corresponding study programmes. Budget planning for the study programmes takes place annually, in accordance with the overall budget of HEI. It is allocated "in line with tariffs, plans, and cost estimates" and approved by the management of HEI. A conversation with members of management indicates that in general there are limited research funding opportunities available for private universities in Latvia, and overall legislation in Latvia makes it prohibitive for private institutions taking part of research, which impacts the overall capacity of the HEI to attract additional funding.

The system for funding scientific and applied research is in place. Financial support is available to the staff for their scientific research work, as well as trips, participation in conferences and publications are awarded in accordance with HEI-wide policies of finance distribution. According to SAR p.47, the research funding made available to the staff is a minor fraction of the overall funding per student (1.2% and 2.5% respectively for bachelor and master's programmes), which might pose a question to what extent the ambition of HEI to intensify its research activities within the study field is attainable (as indicated both in SAR and the interviews with the management of HEI), and whether further investment in research activities of the study field by HEI may be needed.

1.3.2. The HEI has made substantial investments to provide the infrastructure and resources for the implementation of the study field. SAR p.14 indicates the investment of 54.000 EUR in developing specialized library resources and technological support for the study environment over the span of the previous reporting period. According to the site visit and the relevant information available in SAR chapter 2.3, it can be concluded that a unified system and procedures for the improvement and purchase of material, methodological, informative, etc. provision has been established. Experts' meeting with students confirmed that acquisition of materials for the study field takes place via requests to the teaching staff or the head of the study field, and corresponds with the acquisition procedure outlined in SAR chapter 2.3. However, it must be noted that in principle students do not have the agency to make a direct request to the library for the acquisition of new materials (which would correspond with the principles of student-centered-learning), as their requests need to be approved by a number of staff members, as outlined in SAR p.51.

The study programmes are hosted in a generous shared study space where students are allocated working desks. In addition, a partially separated event space (curtain) and several small scale meeting rooms, as well as a computer class with 12 workstations are available as part of the facilities (SAR p.49), however it was made not entirely clear during the visit if the amount and size of the rooms is sufficient to meet the needs of the study field. The experts learned that the workstations are fitted with the latest software needed for the implementation of study programmes. Furthermore, additional auditorium spaces with AV equipment are available in the building, and they are shared among multiple study programmes. These can be booked by the staff. It is important to note that the building is shared with the study field of audiovisual arts, and therefore offers a diverse range of spaces with multiple lighting conditions and classroom arrangement possibilities.

The facilities also contain other equipment purchased for the study field, including printing facilities and an architectural model workshop. Upon the visit of the facilities, the experts were not convinced whether the size of the model workshop, and its low ceiling height is suitable for the amount of students enrolled within the study field. Furthermore, no 3D printing or other contemporary

fabrication technologies were observed. Experts learned from the visit that most of these procedures are conducted by external vendors outside of HEI. As testified by the large quantity of high quality architectural models produced as part of the study process, it appears that architectural model making is crucial to the implementation of the study field, however, the workshop facility's size may limit the possibility of fully doing so.

At the same time, several hot wire foam cutting machines were noticed in the main studio space, but no mechanical air exhausts for removing the toxic fumes were fitted to the space. The lack of exhaust systems for the foam cutters poses questions of student health and safety while model making. Furthermore, in the meeting with experts, staff on behalf of students emphasized the lack of food catering available on site.

As it became apparent during the interviews with the staff and facility visit, not all of the teaching staff are allocated permanent workspace; workarounds include using meeting rooms and other spaces to be converted into temporary workstations. This observation refers not only to temporary employed staff, but also elected staff. Furthermore, it became apparent that staff are using their own personal equipment in the process of implementing study objectives. All of this poses questions both about the well-being and productivity of the staff, but also their ability to perform administrative and preparatory tasks for teaching.

1.3.3. The HEI has developed a system for improvement and purchase of methodological and informative provision. Its main library hosts a collection of printed publications (over 26.000 titles according to SAR p.50), as well as access to various digital databases of academic and professional publications, as well as e-magazines, and e-books. At the same time, it must be noted that only a fraction of these volumes are relevant to the theme of the study field. On the location where the study field is implemented, there is another part of the library (presented to experts as a reading room), with approximately 500 volumes that directly correspond to the themes of the study field. All of these titles of the library are indexed in a single joint catalogue that is accessible to students and staff. Meetings with the staff revealed that online resource access should be improved on the location where the study field is implemented. New volumes can be ordered in a clearly outlined procedure that is mediated via the director of the study field. The interviews with students confirmed the system of purchase of new materials is effective.

The main library of HEI is located at a different location than the facilities of the study field, however volumes can be accessed or ordered via the digital catalog. SAR p.50 indicates that 60% of overall library titles are in English, however no information is available how many titles related to the study field are in English, or how many of the titles overall are related to the study field and used in the implementation of the study programmes.

In addition to the central library, the study field has an on-site reading room with content specific to the study field. The collection of the reading room is very small but high quality. Members of the staff approximated it is below 500, and SAR p.52 indicates 470 titles. The volumes in the collection are contemporary and very relevant to the study field and of an exceptionally high quality, however the range of volumes is narrow and leaves much room for improvement and expansion of the catalog. SAR p.47 indicates the budget for supply of books for the study field is EUR 1.000 per year for each of the study programmes, which would result in acquisition of approximately 20-40 new volumes annually if the budget was fully spent.

1.3.4. Overall the study field is appropriately equipped with IT infrastructure both in terms of software and hardware. Several digital platforms are used to organize the study process on HEI

level, most notably the e-learning platform "Moodle". Likewise, study spaces have wireless networking, access to multiple format printing facilities, classrooms fitted with multimedia technology (including for videoconferencing and optional remote learning), as well as multiple rooms with computer workstations are available to students. Several of the computer rooms are equipped with high performance computers and leading software packages used in the architecture industry. At the same time, it must be noted that experts were made aware during the visit that many of the teaching staff in the study field are using their personal IT equipment for implementing the study programmes.

The physical as well as thematic proximity to other study fields focusing on audiovisual media arts means the architecture programme has access to shared facilities, including a photo studio, sound recording studio, and a film studio. Furthermore, research into themes of virtual reality are taking place among some of the staff both within and outside of the study field. According to interviews with staff and students, there is a further potential for shared use of these resources in order to further improve the quality and competitiveness of the study field.

1.3.5. The HEI has developed a comprehensive policy for attracting qualified teaching staff, and likewise a regulation is defined by HEI for the election of academic positions. These policies are accessible on the RISEBA website, and are outlined in SAR chapter 2.3. Interview with the management of the study field revealed that the procedures for attracting teaching staff are two-fold, and entails both formal and informal measures, consisting of job advertisements, but also word of mouth and personal networks. It was acknowledged that teaching staff from abroad are more often attracted via informal means, and the teaching staff from Latvia—via formal means. This is explained by the specific nature of the professional field.

Meetings with the management of the study field revealed that the study field is relatively small in terms of student numbers, and therefore financial constraints are limiting the amount of full time elected staff, which currently are 7, in addition to 49 non-elected staff. Academic staff undergo an annual performance review, and elected staff need to meet long term indicators (measured in points) to be re-appointed every 6 years, such as a certain amount of publication of papers and monographs.

1.3.6. The HEI has developed a procedure for didactic development and qualification improvement of the academic staff. A part of the framework includes analysis and feedback of the academic staff annually based in 3 main areas, as indicated in SAR p.56: scientific, teaching, and organizational work. Each of the areas are evaluated by the manager, and the outcome of the evaluation is linked to remuneration, serving as an incentive. Furthermore, the scientific and teaching qualifications of staff are increased on an ongoing basis, and are measured via publications, scientific or creative work, conferences, administrative tasks in research projects, contracts, and other endeavors. HEI offers support for these activities in terms of financing them or awarding paid time to complete these projects.

The HEI is also organizing regular methodological seminars (minimum attendance 50% according to SAR p.59, but not explicitly confirmed by the academic staff). Meetings with the staff and the management indicate the seminars offered to the staff are spanning across a broad range of topics. While SAR indicates that there are annually defined themes to these seminars, such as 'Innovating Teaching Methods and Digitalization' or intercultural communication and diversity, the Table 3.5 in SAR p.57 indicates a broad list of diverse topics that do not necessarily amount to a continuous study of a particular focus area. Moreover, the list indicates that many of the courses are managerial/administrative in their content, focusing more on practical, and/or technical skills in

administrative technology, yet leaving insufficient emphasis on developing student centered learning and pedagogy in a coherent manner over time.

Furthermore, meetings with the staff revealed that they attend on average 3-4 of these seminars a year. More importantly, the meeting revealed a prevailing understanding among the staff members that pedagogical development takes place informally, i.e. teaching methods transmitted as tacit knowledge between cooperation of junior and senior academic staff, and not in any structured way through seminars. This poses a question to the effectiveness and appropriateness of the current model of development seminars, as well as the overall institutional culture when it comes to developing pedagogical skills, considering the fact that the vast majority of staff in the study field come primarily from the background of practice not teaching.

1.3.7. In general, the workload of academic staff is split between three areas: research, teaching, and administration. HEI has developed a clear policy of planning, assigning, and recording academic workload to the academic staff. SAR p.62 indicates that currently, the weight of scientific activities is 0.35 or 35 % of the total score and is likely to be increased in future in the study field. Furthermore, various incentives exist to reward academic/scientific activity of the staff.

At the same time, meetings with staff revealed that the workload division between the three main areas is not clearly defined at the level of the study field, or at least it is not communicated clearly to the staff. During the meeting with staff, experts were unable to obtain any clear answer about the obligations of staff in terms of their workload in conducting multiple categories of work (research, teaching, administration). Some members of staff suggested that each case is different, and there is no regulated policy in place for the study field, which potentially contradicts the information provided at SAR, or at least suggests that in-part the workload balance is determined by informal means.

1.3.8. Students receive support on multiple levels by the HEI/study field. Career counseling, psychological support, career development as well as internship coordination services are available to students as indicated in SAR p.63. Furthermore, financial support is also available to students in the form of tuition fee discounts, all of which are available via HEI-wide policies of distribution. According to information obtained during experts' visit, support for international students is coordinated by the international office. It has not been possible to ascertain whether a formalized support system for international students exists, but it is clear that in principle international students have access to all the student support services provided by the HEI, and that they receive additional support via formal and informal means.

Also at the level of study field, there is an overall sense of clear communication and support among the students and graduates. Meetings with the students revealed that the informal atmosphere in the study field works very well to solve any difficulties they have, and the leadership of the study field is available for communication at any moment to solve any issues they might have. It must be noted that the current head of the study field was held in high regard by the students and the graduates.

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

Overall the HEI offers a good provision of resources for the implementation of the study field. On the level of HEI most procedures/systems/policies are in place for acquiring provisions, distributing financial support for the implementation of study programmes, as well as attracting staff and

ensuring its didactic and pedagogical development, even if the financial means are limited in some areas. The workspaces are inspiring even if minor shortfalls exist, the IT infrastructure is decent and development of library provisions clearly defined, student support available. At the same time, the shortcomings emerge on the implementation of these policies on the level of the study field, and institutionalizing the previously informal policies.

Strengths:
1. Sharing of facilities with the audiovisual media study field provides a lot of potential for collaboration, and access to high quality spaces.
2. Multiple forms of support, formal and informal, that are made available to the students.
3. Informal and stimulating workspace for the students of the study field
4. The contents of the reading room correspond with the latest developments in the field.

Weaknesses:
1. Relatively low amount of resources for strengthening the research output of the study field, both in terms of funding and allocated research time for staff (35%).
2. Lack of material and equipment provisions for the teaching staff of the study field.
3. Very small volume of library resources relevant for the topics specific to the study field.
4. Didactic development seminars not designed for the long term development of competencies within the specific study field.
5. Pedagogical training among the staff not recognized and implemented by the management of the study field.
6. Workload division is not made clear to the staff.
7. Model workshop inadequate in its dimensions, capacity and equipment for the size of the study field.
8. Allocation of functions among the facilities is not fully optimal—staff are lacking permanently designated working spaces, the amount of available seminar and activity rooms in relation to the total number of students is relatively low.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1 According to SAR, p.65, the direction of Architecture and Construction is implemented at the Faculty of Architecture and Design (FAD) of RISEBA. The department implements 2 study programmes - the academic Bachelor's programme "Architecture" and the professional Master's programme "Architecture." The scientific research strategy of the architecture and construction direction is derived from the general Scientific Development Strategy of RISEBA. The research interests of the academic staff are mainly related to the study courses they teach. Academic staff, individually and with students, carry out research work, present the results at international conferences and prepare publications, such as ADAMarts, the International Student Research and Artistic Creativity Conference, etc. Bearing that the study programmes are focused more on the practical and professional part of the field, their undertaken work is in line with the development aims, except for the number of projects that needs to be higher with greater involvement of real-life scenarios and architectural problems. The experts encourage the study field in further involvement and development in international and national research projects. The joint work of students and teaching staff could be disseminated through joint publications, therefore implying the relevance of the research projects with the development of the aims of the RISEBA and FAD as well as relevant industry. There are 53 faculty members, out of which HEI elects only 7. According to the panel interview with the University management, the research activities are 1/3 of the teaching staff's engagement during their working hours. However, the international evaluation of the activities of

scientific institutions of the Ministry of Education and Science and Technopolis Group Eesti has granted the RISEBA with only 1 point, indicating a low research performance level at the RISEBA. The mismatch between the time allocated and the achieved results needs more attention. The quality of the SAR needs to be praised; whereas the performance indicators are very well written, the department lacks its initial implementation. The recommendations made by the experts are favorable, and the University has started its implementation; therefore, the expert panels encourage the further development of the initiated strategy.

1.4.2 The relation between architectural design and artistic creation in the study field and the study process has been defined and ensured. It is efficient, while the relationship with scientific research needs to be improved. Bearing that most of the teaching staff and guest lecturers come from the industry and are well-renowned architects, the architectural design research and the outcomes thereof are integrated into the study process in the Study Programmes of all levels. The teaching staff involved in design studios transfer their design experience into lectures. During the panel expert interview, the high engagement of the teaching staff and progressive methodology for designing activities involving students to research was visible. Referring to SAR p.68, there is an apparent relatively serious effort of the study field in organizing the International Student/Professional Research and Artistic Creativity Conferences; producing the Latvian architecture magazine, "Latvijas architektūra" and the academic journal ADAMarts, as an English-language journal which is relevant to both the Bachelor and the Master Professional Programme. Students have a favorable opinion about the teaching staff, and they see the practical approach of the academic staff - it is adjusted to the type of courses.

1.4.3 International cooperation in scientific research within the study field and the relevant study programmes is relatively ensured. The advantage of the study field is the English taught courses, which makes it very favorable for the students and the teaching staff to be easily engaged in the international environment. There has been considerable mobility of incoming teaching staff and outgoing students, whereas the benefits were visible and considerate. The expert panel encourages the outgoing teaching staff mobility, as well as joint tailored projects/programmes with different international architectural schools through Erasmus or other schemes, which could further increase the internationalization of the programme.

1.4.4 The RISEBA has developed mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research through the RISEBA Scientific Committee and different regulations deriving from it, where academic work at RISEBA, besides pedagogical work, includes research projects, organizational work, and scientific work (research) financed from the University funding. The same was verified during the interview with the management of RISEBA but did not receive the same feedback from the teaching staff. It appears that the study field needs more engagement in this matter, in order to be well-functioning and efficient. The recent initiative of focusing on the research activities and engaging the adequate teaching staff to develop the improvement research strategy looks promising SAR, p. 117. The expert panel encourages the creation of the physical space (e.g., offices for the teaching staff and researchers) for the teaching staff and researcher to conduct more thorough and concentrated work and implement a sense of belonging in that environment.

1.4.5 The RISEBA has developed mechanisms to promote the involvement of the students in scientific research through the final thesis of both levels. Furthermore, the program students can present at the annual international student scientific conferences of the University (SAR, p.73). However, the expert panel encourages the promotion of the participation of the teaching staff in research which would be realized by strengthening the development of the study content with the solutions of research-relevant topics, consequently offering the possibility of students' involvement

in these projects. In Project-Based Learning (PBL), students work in groups with clients, including local community groups, charities, health organizations, and regional authorities. In some cases, the projects involve actual building in others, designing urban masterplans, or even consultation exercises. In every case, the project is actual, happening in real time with real people. Therefore the application of project research, as a didactic strategy, adequately exercised, is a relevant part of the teaching-learning process of the architecture student. Moreover, these results can be presented at conferences, scientific articles, exhibitions, reports, etc. Therefore, having the possibility of producing joint publications with students' contributions. Furthermore, the Expert Panel encourages finding other innovative approaches for these mechanisms to be well-functioning and efficient.

1.4.6 In SAR p.73, some innovative solutions are integrated into the study process. By employing new solutions, study field is trying to enhance teaching & learning methods through its involvement with industry and business cooperation, especially with a modern infrastructure, which can foster and encourage innovative approaches.

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

The artistic and design approach is conducted effectively, and outcomes are developed and incorporated into the study content. Internationalization is being enhanced, and there is significant potential for improvement. However, the teaching staff and students' involvement in scientific research is moderate. Therefore, the study field should find ways of endorsing a greater involvement.

Strengths:
1. Good possibilities for research activities of the teaching staff connected with the market.
2. Possibilities of involving students in research activities.
3. The international involvement of the incoming teaching staff is at a reasonable level.
4. The English language level is an advantage when disseminating the research findings on the international level and obtaining up-to-date information.

Weaknesses:
1. Motivation system for teaching staff involved in scientific research activities is insufficient.
2. Low outgoing teaching staff mobility.
3. Physical space (e.g., offices for the teaching staff and researchers) is insufficient to conduct thorough and concentrated work and implement a sense of belonging in that environment.
4. The teaching staff and students' involvement in scientific research is moderate.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The artistic and design approach is conducted effectively, and outcomes are developed and incorporated into the study content. However, the teaching staff and students' involvement in scientific research is moderate. Therefore, FAD should find ways of endorsing greater involvement through Project-Based Learning (PBL), Live Projects whose results can be presented at conferences, scientific articles, exhibitions, reports, etc.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1. The HEI has implemented an internationalization strategy of the level of study field, and is regulated by the internationalization strategy of RISEBA. As indicated in SAR p.74, HEI as a whole is involved in a range of organizations to promote its visibility, ranging from the Latvia Association of Architects, State Culture Capital Foundation, as well as Kim? Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, and others. According to SAR annex #15, no formal cooperation agreements exist with these institutions. Yet, the study outcomes (thesis projects), the public programme (Slice of Architecture), as well as the extracurricular activities of the teaching staff all indicate that some degree of cooperation with local organizations takes place on a case-by-case basis, not necessarily formalizing this into long term cooperation agreements.

As indicated in SAR p.76, the cooperation with other professional associations and organizations in Latvia takes place predominantly via the professional activity of the teaching staff outside of their commitments to the HEI, such as advisory roles to the Ministry of Culture, National Council of Architecture, and accreditation committees. While this may benefit to the improvement of the qualification of staff and the respective institutions, the positive impact of these cooperations on the achievement of study goals within the study field has not been documented.

Within the framework of the particular study field, the cooperation with institutions based in Latvia is listed in SAR annex #15, and includes 15 agreements. The list includes other HEIs in Latvia, three architecture practices for cooperation in terms of internships, and other organizations. Several lecturers from other HEIs are involved in implementation of study programmes, and also a cooperation agreement with Riga Technical University (RTU) exists for cooperation in research. The information provided at Annex #13 by the HEI management during the evaluation procedure suggests that cooperation with RTU has taken place on several occasions during the reporting period, such as annual summer schools and workshops. At the same time, interviews with the management of the study field revealed that despite their physical proximity, the cooperation with the other accredited architecture programme in Latvia at RTU remains limited.

Cooperation with employers is another characteristic of the study field. To an extent, this is mediated by Student Career Counsellor, whose role is to support students in their development by coordinating the internship opportunities with the needs of the study programme and students, as outlined on SAR p.75. It indicates internship as a form of cooperation, which is mediated by a trilateral agreement. On the bachelor's level, the internship is seen as an optional component, while on master's level the internship is a mandatory one. In reality, the interviews with students, graduates, and employers indicated an overwhelming ambivalence in terms of the relationship between the study programme, the internship, and employment in parallel to the studies.

Beyond the curriculum and staff cooperation with external organizations in Latvia, the study field is involved with organizing open lecture cycles "Slice of Architecture", which are open to the public, and involve several local and international practitioners.

1.5.2. Both the SAR and the expert visit led to an impression that the HEI and in particular the study field have aspirations for a strong international outlook. Among other evidence, the fact that the study field is implemented in English, and has international teaching staff testifies to that. Furthermore, a number of teaching staff have been involved with other international partner institutions in different capacities over the reporting period. SAR p.78 lists the multiple forms of international cooperation available for students, and this includes double degree programmes, bilateral exchange programmes, participation in Erasmus+ mobility schemes, as well as

participation in other events organized by foreign academic partners.

There are no joint or double degree programmes being implemented currently within the study field, however the HEI has a positive experience of joint programmes in other study fields. Both SAR p.78 and the meeting with the management indicated that opportunities are being explored for forming a double degree programme in the study field, and a further internationalization as well as the rise of the study programme's international profile are seen as the key benefits of this process. At the same time, both the information in SAR and the experts' visit did not result in a clear justification for the choice of the proposed partner institution—Faculty of Architecture at Universidad CEU Cardenal Herrera in Valencia, Spain. The meeting with the management suggested that the cooperation with this particular institution is "inherited" from the previous management of the study field.

The study field has established a number of partnerships with foreign academic institutions. SAR p.79 indicates that there are 18 partner universities for the study field in 10 countries, and the number of students who have participated in Erasmus+ mobility schemes has doubled within the reporting period. Interviews with the management of the study field suggest that the choice of partner institutions is based on similarity between the programmes and the curriculum as well as the reputation of the institutions. In practice, however, the selection of partner institutions seems to be based on previous informal agreements or convenience. The SAR annex #17 indicates that the vast majority of incoming students (18 out of 22) within the period of 2016-2021 come from three universities in Turkey. Likewise, the vast majority of outgoing students (8 out of 9) within the same reporting period went to a single university in Spain.

1.5.3. The HEI has a system for attracting staff and students from abroad and it is regulated by rules, strategy and other frameworks developed at the HEI level. According to the interview with the management of the study field, the procedures for attracting teaching staff are two-fold, and entails both formal and informal measures, consisting of job advertisements, but also word of mouth and personal networks. It was acknowledged that teaching staff from abroad are more often attracted via informal means, and the teaching staff from Latvia—via formal means.

Staff mobility exists, but remains asymmetrical—both Annexes #16 and #18 indicate that the vast majority of staff mobility consists of incoming teachers. While this can be beneficial for the realization of the study goals, it also implies a severely limited outward mobility of staff, therefore undermining the internalization efforts by the study field. Among the key difficulties in this regard, SAR p.82 mentions rigid scheduling and limited financing for outgoing mobility.

Students from abroad are crucial for the study field, since it is implemented in English, and has an international outlook. The HEI as a whole is involved in maintaining good practices in the attraction of international students. For the study programme, European Union, CIS and Baltic countries represent the key target markets for attracting foreign students, and to an extent this corresponds with the international students attracted by the programme (SAR, p.80). The participation in outgoing student mobility has increased substantially over the reporting period, as indicated in both SAR p.79 and Annex #17. Likewise, the incoming student mobility has reached the level of a total 20 students within the previous 6 years.

Both SAR (p.81-82) and the meeting with the management of HEI and the study field indicate that students from abroad are attracted via several strategies primarily at the level of HEI. This involves representatives from the HEI visiting foreign institutions and establishing partnerships, but also taking part in education fairs, involving embassies, chambers of commerce, as well as the network of current students and alumni. Furthermore, multiple channels of social media are used to promote

the study field. At the same time, the HEI-level strategies for attracting students in some instances may not take fully into account the overall need for improving the international reputation of the particular study programmes, or the specifics of the particular study field beyond that of HEI. Allocating more resources for strengthening the international recognition and identity of the particular study field and possibly the specific study programmes might therefore be a consideration.

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

In principle, internalization and cooperation is one of the successful aspects of the study field. Implemented in English, and engaging with the public and other organizations, institutions, and HEIs both on local and international level, in many ways the study field benefits from these institutional relationships. The HEI has developed procedures and protocols in place for internationalization and cooperation to take place. However, on the level of implementation of these procedures in the study field, several inconsistencies exist. For example, student mobility is growing but in practice is dominated by a very few partner institutions. An attractive possibility of a joint degree programme is explored, but the choice of the potential partner institution is not sufficiently substantiated. International staff mobility has contributed to the success of the study field and is one of its key competitive advantages, but at the same time it remains asymmetrical with very little outgoing staff. Internships are considered an important part of cooperation, but in practice the relationship between the curriculum, the internship, and employment in parallel to the studies can be unclear. The study field is promoted abroad via multiple means, but some of the channels are not necessarily reaching the largest audiences that are specific to the discipline of architecture. Furthermore, the selection of partner institutions is based on previous informal agreements and mere convenience, and this can become a negative factor that is limiting and misdirecting the development of internationalization of the study field. Therefore all such agreements should be critically reassessed in regard to the current strategic objectives of the study field and its programmes.

Strengths:
1. Study field as a whole is oriented towards internationalization and cooperation.
2. Fluctuating, but regular incoming staff mobility.

Weaknesses:
1. In certain instances cooperation with both local and international HEIs and institutions can be based on convenience or informal agreements, therefore not being sufficiently integrated with the study objectives.
2. Teaching staff from abroad attracted via informal means, no complete system in place, undermining the integrity of the study process.
3. The outgoing staff mobility is very low.
4. Both incoming and outgoing student mobility is limited to a very few institutions, undermining the integrity of the study process.

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 cooperation is implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations. It ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field. Minor shortcomings do exist in having a formalized and transparent policy for attracting foreign staff, and establishing

meaningful, strategically aligned partnerships with other HEIs and organizations.

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

Analysis

Previous recommendations for the study field:

1. From the previous evaluation RISEBA received recommendations to increase the number of leading positions for the provision of sustainability of the study programme.
The number has been increased by 7 (2 lecturers, 2 assistant professors, 1 researcher and 2 leading researchers were elected, as well as 1 lecturer, 1 assistant professor and 1 leading researcher were re-elected). At present, the number of management positions has increased to 10 (SAR p. 83). Yet there are questions arising now - both about the well-being and productivity of the staff, but also their ability to perform administrative and preparatory tasks for teaching. As it became apparent during the interviews with the staff and facility visit, not all of the teaching staff are allocated permanent workspace; workarounds include using meeting rooms and other spaces to be converted into temporary workstations. This observation refers not only to temporary employed staff, but also elected staff. Recommendations regarding increase in number of the leading positions are fulfilled. Yet there should be more care about the well-being of the staff.

2. The HEI was recommended to introduce employee development policies.
There has been regular personnel training introduced (SAR p. 83 and site interviews with the management of HEI, academic personnel). More than 35 seminars, 9 conferences have been organised during the reporting period, experience exchange trips with cooperating universities have been organised (Annex #19). Yet the nature of the training is more general and to assist in daily work and work with students in means of technical issues. There should be more emphasis on specific content based issues, pedagogical skills, keeping in mind a significant part of the teaching staff not being trained as teachers with professional pedagogical skills. Recommendations regarding introduction of employee development policies are fulfilled, still it should get more specific to the study field.

3. Provision of more extensive mobility options was recommended in the previous evaluation.
Mobility of students, as well as lecturers, has occurred. During the reporting period the following movement occurred: 9 departing students, 5 departing lecturers, 20 arriving students, 23 arriving lecturers, 11 Erasmus internships (Annexes #16, 17, 18, 19). Still the outgoing staff mobility is low and outgoing student mobility relatively low. According to the interviews with students in the site visits, the HEI provides the necessary information and encourages student mobility. The numbers of arriving lecturers are relatively high. The lists of partner universities have been significantly reviewed over the last years - cooperation with higher education institutions that have received equivalent accreditations is being developed. There are 18 partner universities for the study field in 10 countries (SAR p. 79), and the number of students who have participated in Erasmus+ mobility schemes has doubled within the reporting period. Overall the recommendation regarding provision of more extensive mobility options is fulfilled. Still more efforts should be considered for the outgoing staff mobility in the future.

4. Supplementation of library resources was recommended in the previous evaluation.
The HEI has made substantial investments to provide the infrastructure and resources for the implementation of the study field. SAR p.14 indicates the investment of 54.000 EUR in developing specialized library resources and technological support for the study environment over the span of

the previous reporting period. Its main library hosts a collection of printed publications (over 26.000 titles according to SAR p.50), as well as access to various digital databases of academic and professional publications, as well as e-magazines, and e-books. In addition to the central library, the study field has an on-site reading room with content specific to the study field. The collection of the reading room is very small but high quality (SAR p.52 indicates 470 titles). The volumes in the collection are contemporary and very relevant to the study field and of an exceptionally high quality, however the range of volumes is narrow and leaves much room for improvement and expansion of the catalog. Recommendation regarding supplementation of library resources is fulfilled, still the same recommendation is current now to ensure further growth of library resources.

Previous recommendations for the professional master's study programme "Architecture" (47581):

1. To ensure the sustainability of the study programme, it is recommended to increase the ratio of elected faculty members to the total number of faculty members involved in the implementation of the programme.

Please see the analysis of recommendation No.1 for the study field, the same applies here.

2. As one of the goals of the study program is to provide studies in an international environment, it is recommended to expand the range of cooperation with foreign schools of architecture to expand the opportunities for students to use ERASMUS + and other mobility programs.

Please see the analysis of recommendation No.3 for the study field, the same applies here. In addition, it should be mentioned that student mobility for the master's study programme is significantly lower than for the bachelor's study programme. During the reporting period, the following movement occurred: 0 departing students, 5 departing lecturers, 1 arriving student, 23 arriving lecturers, 3 Erasmus internships (Annexes #16, 17, 18, 19). Overall the recommendation regarding expanding the range of cooperation with foreign schools of architecture is fulfilled. Still, more efforts should be considered for the outgoing student and staff mobility in the future.

3. Encourage an increase in the number of publications by teaching staff in internationally recognised peer-reviewed magazines.

Teaching staff carry out research work, present the results at international conferences and prepare publications, such as ADAMarts, the International Student Research and Artistic Creativity Conference. The RISEBA has developed mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research through the RISEBA Scientific Committee and different regulations deriving from it, where academic work at RISEBA, besides pedagogical work, includes research projects, organizational work, and scientific work (research) financed from the University funding. The recent initiative of focusing on the research activities and engaging the adequate teaching staff to develop the improvement research strategy looks promising SAR, p. 117. Still the same recommendation is current now to ensure further increase in the number of publications in internationally recognised peer-reviewed magazines.

4. To conceptually address the inadequacy of the developed programme to meet the architectural profession standard in terms of the required knowledge of the national language by the start of the programme.

As indicated in the SAR and site visit meetings with the directors of the study programmes and graduates, the study of the national language is offered to all foreign students whose studies last

one semester or more.

5. As the structure of the study programme consists mainly of small study courses of 2KP in order to consolidate students' knowledge, skills and competences, it is recommended to develop larger study courses with a higher number of credits.

The study program fully complies with the Latvian State Cabinet of Ministers August 26, 2014, issued requirements No. 512 regarding state professional higher education standard. As the master's study programme is based on 5 modules and since the previous accreditation period, the study programme has been supplemented with new study courses – there are courses introduced with more KP (Annex 6). The system of modules also serves to consolidate students' knowledge and competencies. As indicated in the SAR, p.127-128 and site visit meetings with the director of the study programme there are plans to introduce a new specialization of the Master's programme in "Landscape Architecture and Urbanism". This will give students more options for specialization and deeper knowledge in their chosen field, leading to the direction to the same goal as this recommendation.

6. To receive regular and methodical information on the quality of the study work, it is recommended to establish an internal quality assessment system.

During on-site visits, responsible persons for internal quality assurance maintenance were questioned regarding the various existing surveys of the stakeholders (students, graduates, employers). All the surveys and their examples are outlined in a "Surveying procedure" document that is accessible in SAR p.33-34. According to the information gathered on the onsite visit and that is written in this document, RISEBA has implemented the following forms of surveys. The improvements that are made in this evaluation period according to what has been seen during the site visits, the internal quality assurance system is well-functioning and in place.

7. As the compliance of the licensed programme with the requirements of the normative acts in the field of education is ensured in the context of RISEBA full cycle architectural education (Bachelor and Master level), students of the licensed programme who have obtained Bachelor degree in Architecture at another higher education institution shall compare the completed study courses with RISEBA Bachelor programme and in case of non-compliance ensure the completion of the failed study courses.

There is a comprehensive set of policies and documents developed for the admission of students, for the recognition of the study period, professional experience, prior formal and non-formal education and for the assessment of students' achievements and learning outcomes - internal regulations "Admission requirements", "Rules for the Recognition of Study Results Achieved during Previous Education or Professional Experience", "Preparation of Study Course Comparison Protocol and Individual Study Plan". This recommendation is fulfilled.
However, there is another unacceptable situation regarding the admission requirements present - the regulation "Admission requirements" Appendix #10 p.8 sets out the requirements for previous education as "Academic or professional undergraduate degree in architecture or an equal area." (see the analysis of criterion 1.1.4.). This has to be immediately updated to ensure that only persons holding bachelor's degrees in architecture are admitted to the master's programme.

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

RISEBA has taken into account the previous recommendations and are implementing them to

improve the study field and each study programme. The deficiencies that are mentioned in the analysis can be considered as recommendations for the next accreditation period. The recommendations regarding increase in the number of the leading positions and employee development policies are quantitatively fulfilled, the quality is the question now. The quality in terms of well-being of the staff and employee development more specific to the study field. More efforts should be considered for the outgoing staff mobility in the future. Recommendation regarding supplementation of library resources is being taken into account, it is fulfilled qualitatively, still the same recommendation is current now.

Strengths:

1. Presence of acknowledged international tutors and local practising professionals.

2. The quality of library resources.

Weaknesses:

1. Care about the well-being of the staff.

2. Employee development policies missing specific content based issues and promotion of pedagogical skills.

3. The outgoing staff mobility is low.

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

1. The number of leading positions has been increased (SAR p. 83).

2. Employee development policies have been introduced (SAR p. 83 and site interviews with the management of HEI, academic personnel).

3. More extensive mobility options have been introduced (Annexes #16, 17, 18, 19, SAR p. 79, interviews with students).

4. Supplementation of library resources has been done (SAR p. 50).

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

The teaching staff and students' involvement in scientific research is moderate. Therefore, the study field should find ways of endorsing greater involvement in these activities, i.e. a motivation and support system for teaching staff involved in scientific research activities.
Gather the data of survey results received and compile a summary that can be sent out to the involved stakeholders of the specific surveys (graduates and employers). The student survey results must be published on Moodle or/an website where they can be easily accessed.
Involve and monitor lecturers in the quality assurance processes conducting surveys of their performance, well-being and development annually.
Designate permanent physical work space for the teaching staff and researchers to conduct thorough and concentrated work.
Develop mechanisms to encourage outgoing teaching staff mobility, as well as joint tailored projects with different international architectural schools.

Develop a formalized and transparent strategy with criteria for establishing partnerships with other HEIs and organizations, and reevaluate the existing partnerships on those basis.
Amend regulation "Admission requirements" Appendix #10 p.8 to ensure that only persons holding a bachelor degree in architecture are admitted to a master study programme.
Amend "Regulation on recognition of previous education or professional experience achieved learning outcomes" adding specific rules for study field to ensure that persons who benefit from recognition of study results achieved during previous education or professional experience are not exempted from essential professional study courses, e.g., architectural design.

Long-term recommendations

Allocate more resources to strengthen the research output in the study field, including increasing the percentage of workload available for research.
Allocate sufficient resources to meet the material needs of the teaching staff.
Develop and implement a policy for the well being of the staff, including clear principles about the workload division based on the amount of their working hours.
Establish collaborations and introduce more study content from the other relevant study fields of RISEBA.
All stakeholders (students, teaching staff) should get introduced and made aware of relevant documents and policies—anti-plagiarism policy and procedures, principles and methods of the assessment of the study work, workload balance and responsibilities, etc.
Expand the current reading room into an actual library, scaled proportionally to the study field, and including extensive literature relevant to the study field.
Develop a didactic and pedagogical training programme that is consistent and relevant to the specifics of the study field, and has measurable long term objectives.
Develop a formalized and transparent process for attracting international staff.

II - "Architecture" ASSESSMENT

II - "Architecture" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The academic bachelor's study programme "Architecture" complies with the study field of "Architecture and Construction" indicators, conditions and criteria. The length of the implementation of the study program, which is 3 years and 6 months, is evaluated as sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and practical experience to enter the labor market.

2.1.2.The title of the study programme is "Architecture" in the study field "Architecture and Construction" with education classification code 43581. There is no qualification given as it is an academic bachelor's study programme. The aim of the programme is to ensure and provide innovative, high-quality and compliant education to EU norms at bachelor's level with a possibility to study further on Masters level and obtain professional architect's qualification and as well to prepare

students for further studies in architecture or other studies of their choice. As stated in the SAR p.92, the general objective of the programme is to provide students with the opportunity to acquire general knowledge in the sector of architecture and associated disciplines, to acquire the basic skills and competencies required for work in the profession of an architect and planner, as well as preparing them for further architectural studies or studies of other sectors related to the development of the environment. The total length of studies is 3 and a half years with a total amount of 140 credit points (210 ECTS). The demand and usefulness of this programme is evaluated as high as there are only 2 universities in Latvia that provide studies on Bachelor's level for future architects which is seen as a limited choice. The language of implementation of the studies is in English. The admission requirements of this study programme are 1. Secondary Education; 2. Admission examination in drawing; 3. Document that confirms the knowledge level in English (CE English exam, IELTS or TOEFL certificate).

2.1.3. Since the previous accreditation period, the study programme has been supplemented with new study courses. This decision has been made based on the topicality and by the request of the students. These courses have been implemented as elective courses (Part C). According to SAR p.91, the courses implemented are as follows: 1."Virtual Reality" in 2018/19 and 2."Modern Technologies for Architects" in 2020/21. Furthermore, various new guest lecturers have been attracted to the university, mostly from foreign universities. The content in a few of the courses have been supplemented and updated as, for example, the study course "Fundamental of Design I"; "Basics of Design I"; "Basics of Design II" as well as "Architectural Theory and Criticism I and II". Expert group believes that the changes implemented within the time frame have resulted in improvement of the study programme and its diversity of providing architectural studies.

Professional Master Architecture program received its license on January 10, 2017 and was launched February 2017. In 2019, the first group of graduates completed and graduated from the master program which from then on substantially broadens and extends the study field in RISEBA.

2.1.4. Due to the global economic crisis, the domestic demand for architectural services declined in the time period from 2010 to 2012. After that, starting with 2013, the demand has been constantly and steadily increasing. Until 2011, Latvia was the only country in the Baltic region with only one school of higher education that offered architectural education. Now, RISEBA is the second one but the only university in the region that is a private university which requires students to pay for the studies from their personal resources. The main difference between RTU and RISEBA is that RTU as a state university has budget places while RISEBA has none. It would be great and highly encouraged that RISEBA could find a way that some of the best students have the opportunity to study from the state budget.

Overall, the employment indicators of the graduates of the study programme are steady around 70-75%. In 2016, it was 78,6%, in 2017 - 66,67%, in 2018 - 70%, in 2019 - 76,47% and in 2020 - 72,73%. Due to the fact that the Ministry of Education and Science gathers data of graduates, the information available is that graduates of Bachelor's and Master's programmes of "Architecture" were employed as follows: In the tax year 2019, 100% of the graduates of the 2017 study programme "Architecture" while 60% of the graduates of the 2018.

The study programme started to operate in the study year of 2011/12 according to the SAR p. 96. Since then, the amount of students has nearly tripled, it is a good indicator. As the programme is implemented in English, it is a great possibility to attract international students for studies which is also happening. The countries from which international students are usually attracted are: Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Belarus.

According to the information in the SAR p. 96, the number of matriculated students vary from year to year. In the study year 2017/2018, the total number of matriculated students in the programme "Architecture" reached 10, of which 2 were international students. In the study year 2018/2019 for the first time, students graduated from both – the Bachelor's and Master's study programmes. The number of matriculated students in the Bachelor's study programme was 18, of which 1 was an international student. In study year 2019/2020 the number of matriculated students was 6, of which 1 was an international student. In the study year 2020/2021 the number of matriculated students was 13, of which 3 were international students.

In the school year 2017/2018 the total number of students that dropped out of the programme "Architecture" reached 10 students (3 students in the first year, 5 students in the second year and 2 students in the third year). In study year 2018/2019 the number of students that dropped out decreased to 6 students (2 students in the first, second and fourth year). paper. In study year 2019/2020 the total number of students that dropped out decreased to 4 students (2 students in the first year, 1 student in the third year and 1 student in the fourth year). ms. In the study year 2020/2021 the total number of students that dropped out slightly increased as in the previous year, reaching 6 students (2 students in the first year, 3 students in the second year, 1 student in the fourth year). The main reasons for dropping out overall are academic debts and financial problems while in some cases it may be poor quality of the final paper.

2.1.5. N/A

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

All of the indicators of the study programme are in compliance with the existing preconditions of the implementation of the study programme. The study programme "Architecture" complies with the study field of "Architecture and Construction" indicators, conditions and criteria. The goals, objectives, learning outcomes are in line and in compliance. The corrections made within the study programme since the previous accreditation are according to the law and standard in place. The programme is in demand and there is a flow of incoming students every study year including international students as the programme is provided in English. There is a certain level of dropout rate in the study programme but it is reasonable due to various possible reasons such as financial problems and academic debts. There are no specific shortcomings indicated except no state budget places provided. Everything is in compliance with the criteria.

Strengths:
1. One of the two Bachelor's programmes that provides architectural education in the country;
2. The study programme manages to attract international students due to the provision of studies in English;
3. Low dropout rate.

Weaknesses:
1. Very limited amount of funded places for students and a comparably high tuition fee.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The academic bachelor programme "Architecture" is full time and takes 3 years 6 months to complete. Its goal is to offer students fundamental knowledge about the field of architecture, as well as relevant competences and skills. Its compliance with national regulations, such as state education

and professional standards is indicated in the Annex # 3.2. It must be noted that a new professional standard was approved 08.06.2022 however, the SAR Annex is based on the previous standard. RISEBA has provided compliance with new professional standard as additional information (on 13.10.).

The programme is organized around the matrix of study results, which entail skills, knowledge, and competences. They are distributed across the seven semesters of the programme's duration, with each individual study course covering 2-4 of the study results, as indicated in SAR p.98 and Annex #8. Thematically, the study programme is organized in accordance to 9 modules, which cover the core subjects in architecture, and include thesis and an internship. Compliance with all the relevant regulations is assured in SAR chapter 3.2, and the contents of studies are reviewed regularly by the head of the study field and the teaching staff.

The outcomes of the study programme generally do meet the needs of the industry and the labor market. Interviews with employers confirmed that the skills of graduates conferred on the diverse requirements of the professional practice in Latvia, whether focused on conceptual or technical aspects of the discipline. Likewise, the contents of study courses, both theoretical and practical, are relevant to the scientific and artistic trends of the discipline. At the same time, it is important to note that meeting with the graduates revealed that the technical subjects require much better coordination, as currently they are not aligned with the realities of building construction practice.

One area where the inter-faculty collaboration could be much stronger is the possibility of thematic overlaps with the audiovisual media arts elements of the adjacent study programmes and their facilities in the building. This is echoed by the observation by experts that free elective courses are limited in their range and do not represent students with choice.

Claimed sum of credit points (140) is built up from the total amount of the all A, B, C part courses which means that in practice all courses are mandatory (part A) and limited or free choice electives do not exist.

Some of course descriptions do not contain all the parameters set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (e.g. Architectural Design III, Architectural Design IV is missing the list of literature), there is no description of course "Competitions and Architectural Diplomacy" to find.
The compliance to the professional standard of the study content of the both study programmes is analyzed in the additional document provided by RISEBA October 13. There is the corresponding study course marked for each knowledge, competence and skill required by professional standard.
According to Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications Article 46,

"Training as an architect shall comprise:
(a) a total of at least five years of full-time study at a university or a comparable teaching institution, leading to successful completion of a university-level examination; or
(b) not less than four years of full-time study at a university or a comparable teaching institution leading to successful completion of a university-level examination, accompanied by a certificate attesting to the completion of two years of professional traineeship in accordance with paragraph 4.
" The same is stated on Latvian Law on Regulated Professions and Recognition of the Qualifications, Article 8. Therefore the compliance of the study programs with professional standard can be evaluated only for both study programs as a whole. It can be stated that study contents complies with the requirements of the professional standard.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3. The study programme is implemented with student-centered learning in mind both in theoretical and practical assignments. Student-centered education strategies are outlined in SAR p.101-102, and include a range of approaches, including fostering cooperation between the staff and the students, as well as cultivating their independence and autonomy, among others. During the visit experts noted the positive effects on the informal atmosphere in the study programme, and the possibility of direct communication between the management of the study field and the students. Moreover, there is also a formal system for evaluating each of the study courses at its end, including its implementation methods. At the same time, experts noted during the interviews with staff that the overall understanding of formalized pedagogical methods in architecture is lacking; pedagogy is understood merely as a form of tacit knowledge that can be 'learned by doing' among the staff.

The programme is implemented fully in English. The experts noted that all of the staff, management, students, and graduates possess a good command of English. Foreign students are offered courses in basic Latvian as part of the curriculum. At the same time, it must be noted that some of the study course descriptions are not fully implemented in English, some of the bibliography entries in those descriptions allude to material in Latvian or Russian, which might be inaccessible to foreign students.

2.2.4. The study programme does not include a mandatory professional internship per se, however, a part of its curriculum is formulated as an internship (9 ECTS), or more specifically as "study practice work". According to Annex #11b, This entails a concrete practical assignment the students need to execute under supervision by academic staff and present in the form of a report. According to SAR p.111, in practical terms this can include a short term study trip, or another short term practical assignment. It is important to note that the English term used for this element of the study program may need to be elaborated, since in practical terms it does not entail a placement of a student within an external professional organization.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6. The final examination of the study programme consists of the evaluation of Bachelor's thesis. As described in SAR p.100, it consists of two parts—a written theoretical research paper in the field of architecture and urban development, and a practical part, which is a fully developed architectural or urban development proposal. The practical part must be related to the theoretical part, and overall the thesis topics and contents respond to the themes explored in the study programme.

The topics of the thesis span across multiple themes and project sites in Latvia and abroad. SAR p.111 indicates that the director of the study programme along with the advisory board specify the overarching themes for projects, while specific themes for the thesis are developed in dialogue with the students. Moreover, it must be noted that cooperation with municipalities in Latvia's cities exists, allowing thesis projects to be grounded in more precise and relevant settings, and therefore relevant to the field. Furthermore, it must be added as a positive note that thesis projects are exhibited and disseminated via an annual publication.

At the same time, it must be noted that especially for an academic bachelor program, the vast majority of thesis are constrained to the discursive and formatting conventions of professionalized architecture projects in Latvia, which historically represent a narrow segment of the overall professional architecture discourse. Even while the overall quality of students' design skills is high, the thesis vary in their themes and content, but are homogenous in their form, which adheres to a

specific form of a "professional-vernacular realism." This might be beneficial for preparing students for work in an architectural practice in Latvian professional context, but is much less relevant to those domestic and international students who might choose to practice elsewhere. Furthermore, this does not help HEI in setting apart the study program and the field from its competitors.

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

Overall the academic bachelor study programme "Architecture" meets the criteria of topical, well devised study content that meets the needs of the industry, labor market, as well as the field of artistic and scientific creation. Its curriculum is regularly revised and designed as 9 thematic modules that are covered across the three and a half years of studies. The degree is awarded based on achievements and findings relevant to the field, and certain practices of student centered learning are observed in the implementation of the programme even if the overall level of pedagogical awareness among the staff should be improved over time. It also includes an internship, which is not a placement within a professional organization, but rather a specific task assigned to students. The final thesis is relevant to the field and devised in cooperation with local stakeholders. Furthermore, they are disseminated to the broader public via exhibitions and publications.

Strengths
1. Well rounded structure of the curriculum.
2. The theses are disseminated to the broader public.
3. Great potential in organizing joint courses with the audiovisual media arts program.
4. Diverse and thematically broad structure of the curriculum.

Weaknesses
1. Technical subjects are not always aligned with realities of building construction practices, and students are lacking understanding how to integrate this knowledge into the design project.
2. Student centered learning methods insufficiently explained to staff in terms of a formalized pedagogical training.
3. Not all course descriptions and readings are delivered in English.
4. Student theses have a tendency to be homogenous in their form of representation and design approaches, lacking artistic freedom.
5. Potential of further integration of the curriculum with the audiovisual media arts and other programmes at the HEI is not sufficiently explored.
6. The range of free elective courses is very limited and does not represent a real choice for the students.
7. The contents of "Basics of Legal aspects" is a duplicate of the "The legal framework of construction and design process", which is taught at the master programme. This makes the relevance and quality of the course questionable.

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. The study provisions (informative and material, technical) are partially compliant for the study programme Architecture (43581). Informative resources are available from the library of RISEBA University of Applied Sciences that is located at Meža Street 3, Inter-library subscriptions, online databases and press publications, e-books, e-journals. The Faculty of Architecture and Design has its own library branch and a reading room located in the premises of the faculty at Durbes Street 4 (SAR p. 50, 52). The collection of the reading room is small (470 titles - SAR p.52) but high quality. The budget earmarked for the supply of books in the study program amounts to EUR 1,000 per year (SAR p. 47). There is a procedure developed for convenient ordering of the resources from the library and a procedure for lecturers, including guest lecturers, to request a limited annual amount of new materials of special interest (SAR p. 51). Although due to the relatively small size in numbers of the faculty the procedure works more in an informal and direct communication way, for instance with students and director of the study programme or the dean of the faculty (according to info from site visit meetings with the director of the study programmes, academic staff and students).

Both the students and academic personnel are satisfied with RISEBA e-learning platform MOODLE. Other platforms are integrated and provide the necessary online environment for information and communication.

As for the material and technical provision, during the tour of facilities expert group found it inspiring for the students to have an open studio type design workshop room for different study years to work together and the fact that each student is given 24/7 access to a workplace in the design workshop. A computer class with 12 workstations is available as part of the facilities (SAR p.49). The experts learned that the workstations are fitted with the latest software needed for the implementation of study programmes. Yet, the workshop rooms for wood, carpentry and scale modelling were relatively small in size for the number of students of the study programme. Also the lecture rooms that are divided from the studio type design room only by fabric curtains raised questions. The expert group was impressed by the well equipped multifunctional rooms of the neighbouring study programme of Audiovisual Media and would encourage further collaboration among the programmes.

As it became apparent during the interviews with the staff and facility visit, not all of the teaching staff are allocated permanent workspace; workarounds include using meeting rooms and other spaces to be converted into temporary workstations. This observation refers not only to temporary employed staff, but also elected staff. Furthermore, it became apparent that staff are using their own personal equipment in the process of implementing study objectives. All of this poses questions both about the well-being and productivity of the staff, but also their ability to perform administrative and preparatory tasks for teaching.

2.3.2. N/A.

2.3.3. The funding available to the study programme, funding sources and the use of funding ensures implementation of the study process. The HEI is funded predominantly by tuition fees which make over 80% of its income as indicated in SAR chapter 2.3. The system for funding scientific and applied research is in place. Financial support is available to the staff for their scientific research work, as well as trips, participation in conferences and publications and are awarded in accordance with HEI-wide policies of finance distribution. According to SAR p.47, the research funding made available to the staff is a minor fraction of the overall funding per student (1.2% for bachelor programme), which might pose a question to what extent the ambition of HEI to intensify its

research activities within the study field is attainable (as indicated both in SAR and the interviews with the management of HEI), and whether further investment in research activities of the study field by HEI may be needed.

At the same time the fraction for remuneration for freelance faculty members (15.6% for bachelor programme) ensures valuable contribution of practising local tutors and acknowledged international tutors.

The minimum number of students in the Architecture bachelor's studies programme is 10 (SAR p. 48) - which is met. Each year there are 24 to 27 students enrolled.

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

Overall the HEI offers a good provision of resources for the implementation of the study programme. The study provisions (informative and material, technical) are partially compliant for the study programme, due to lack of material and equipment provisions for the teaching staff, insufficient amount of rooms for simultaneous activities, small model workshop and relatively small volume of library resources. The open studio type workshop is inspiring even if minor shortfalls exist, the IT infrastructure is decent and development of library provisions clearly defined, student support available. The funding available to the study programme, funding sources and the use of funding ensures implementation of the study process. The minimum number of students is met.

Strengths:
1. An open studio type design workshop room for different study years to work together and the fact that each student is given 24/7 access to a workplace in the design workshop.
2. Multiple forms of support, formal and informal, that are made available to the students.
3. Sharing of facilities with the audiovisual media study field provides a lot of potential for collaboration, and access to high quality spaces.
4. Presence of acknowledged international tutors and local practising professionals.

Weaknesses:
1. Relatively low amount of resources for strengthening the research output of the study programme, both in terms of funding and allocated time (35%).
2. Lack of material and equipment provisions for the teaching staff of the study programme.
3. Relatively small volume of library resources relevant for the topics specific to the study programme.
4. Allocation of functions among the facilities is not fully optimal—staff are lacking permanently designated working spaces, the amount of available seminar and activity rooms in relation to the total number of students is relatively low.
5. Model workshop inadequate in its dimensions, capacity and equipment for the size of the study field.

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: Partially compliant

   Interviews with the staff, faculty visit and SAR indicates that there is: (1) a relatively low amount

of resources for strengthening the research output of the study programme; (2) lack of material and equipment provisions for the teaching staff of the study programme; (3) a relatively small volume of library resources relevant for the topics specific to the study programme; (4) allocation of functions among the facilities is not fully optimal; (5) model workshop inadequate in its capacity and equipment for the size and nature of the study field.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements outlined in the regulatory enactments, and it enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. The study program is conducted in English, and the proficiency in the language is at a very good level, verified during the interview with the teaching staff and the students. Of the seven elected teaching staff, 5 have PhDs and 2 with Master's degrees but with sufficient practical experience relevant to the subject. The small number of elected staff has been identified and recognized by the HEI (SAR, p.117); therefore, the development of this realm looks promising and achievable within the indicated period of 5 years. According to SAR pp.120, CVs and during the panel interview verified that most of the visiting lecturers are professionals in the field. They are recruited on a rotating basis, depending on the workload of their primary job. The expert group saw their professional preparedness with the market as positive. Whereas within the framework of studies and research practice, students get acquainted with practices of companies working in architecture, practicing architects, separate projects, and structures both in Latvia and abroad. The research activities of the academic staff provide feedback for the transfer of knowledge from the field of scientific research to creativity and vice versa.

2.4.2. The HEI has purposefully taken measures so that changes in the composition of the teaching staff do positively affect the quality of the study programme's implementation and the study programme's compliance with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments. Especially with the guest lectures engaged for 2-4 semesters. In contrast, the number of elected lectures needs to be increased due to having a more stable composition of the staff responsible for the programme's continuation and maintaining the required changes.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4. Annex 14 of the SER has listed the publications in the last six years for each member of the academic staff, which showcases not a significant number of published articles/research in peer-reviewed editions. All teaching staff who do not have Ph.D. have satisfactory practical experience relevant to the subject being taught. Each member of the teaching staff complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and has five years of practical work experience in their field (SAR, p.117). According to the SAR and the FAD management interview, within the study field, the teaching staff works in three directions: scientific research, pedagogical and organizational, and accordingly, their performance is evaluated. While during the panel interview with the teaching staff, the workload of these three parameters was unclear to them. Therefore, formal and well-defined performance indicators for the teaching staff should be developed and clarified.

2.4.5. A mechanism for the cooperation of the teaching staff in implementing the study programme has been established. It ensures the achievement of the aims of the study program and the interconnection of study courses within the programme. Both local and international lecturers are involved in each course, and the director of the study programme is the primary contact person for

cooperation or working together on the development of the study programme (SAR, p.121). All these activities ensure the quality of studies and support the latest architectural trends. The lecture-student ratio is 1:8, thus ensuring an individual approach for each student.

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

The most significant advantage of the engaged teaching staff is the guest lectures coming from national and international industrial markets, whose experience is up to date and in line with the trends and courses taught. At the same time, the biggest obstacle is the low number of elected teaching staff, who are supposed to be responsible for the continuation of the study programme. Their academic performance is evaluated in three areas (teaching, research, and organization). The low number of elected staff can cause overburden in one of the areas, whereas the distribution of the workload cannot be proportional. The pecking order between the students, management, and the teaching staff showcases that the last seems to be the most unrepresented. The teaching staff's performance should be formal and well-defined. They lack scientific research. But on the other hand, they are doing excellent work with students by always being flexible with their management requests; consequently, their work should be accordingly acknowledged.

Strengths:
1. Proper professional/practical qualification of the teaching staff for the taught courses
2. The good command of the English Language
3. The involvement of the international teaching staff as guest lecturers.

Weaknesses:
1. Small number of the elected teaching staff
2. Lack of scientific publications and the involvement in research-related scientific projects of the academic staff
3. No formal and well-defined performance indicators for the teaching staff

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's professional/practical qualification for the taught courses is in compliance with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme , however, there is a small number of the elected teaching staff.

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

   Annex 6 to study programme SAR provides complete and true analysis of compliance with the State Academic Education Standard. Claimed sum of credit points (140) is built up from the total amount of the all A, B, C part courses which means that in practice all courses are mandatory

(part A) and limited or free choice electives do not exist. However study content concentrates on fulfilling the requirements of the professional standard of the architect covering a wide range of professional aspects allowing students to get an insight in various disciplines.

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The compliance to the professional standard of the study content of the both study programmes is analyzed in the additional document provided by RISEBA October 13. There is the corresponding study course marked for each knowledge, competence and skill required by professional standard.

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

   Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

   Some of course descriptions do not contain all the parameters set forth in Section 56(1) , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (e.g. Architectural Design III, Architectural Design IV is missing the list of literature), there is no description of course "Competitions and Architectural Diplomacy" to find (instead on 31.08.2022 there was provided the description of the course "Architectural institutions, policies, competitions, awards & recognitions". This course can not be found on SAR Annex No. 9 .

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

   Annex to SAR of the study programme "Architecture" 43581 contains all requisites set out in Cabinet regulation No 202 of 19.04.2013 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus"

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

   Annex "Elected faculty members", Annex "Confirmation that the academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements specified in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions"

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   Annex "Opinion of the Council of Higher Education in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions"

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

N/A

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

International guest lecturers and elected international staff are not proficient in Latvian language, but this is not seen as a problem considering English is the working language of the study field. Annex 11

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

Annex 12 - Attestation of the rector of the RISEBA, certifying teaching staff's at least B-2 knowledge of language in which they teach study courses.

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

Annex 7: There is no article in agreement for use of student's intellectual property, however subject is covered by "NL 4901-001 Students' intellectual property management regulation"

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

There is an agreement with Latvian University of Agriculture on opportunities to continue their education, however this HEI does not provide an equivalent study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 6 - Attestation of the rector of the RISEBA, 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.

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

N/A

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Directive 2005/36/EC on the Recognition of professional Qualifications, Article 46, and Law on regulated professions and recognition of professional qualifications Section 8, Paragraph 2, Cabinet regulation No 194 of 19.06.2002 "Izglītības programmu minimālās prasības arhitekta profesionālās kvalifikācijas iegūšanai" may be not fulfilled in case of students with previous education experience, see analysis in assessment p. 1.1.4.

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

See assessment of the criterias 3 - Some of course descriptions do not contain all the parameters set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, 11 - There is an agreement with Latvian University of Agriculture on opportunities to continue their education, however this HEI does not provide an equivalent study programme, 14 - requirements of the Directive 2005/36/EC on the Recognition of professional Qualifications, Article 46, and Law on regulated professions and recognition of professional qualifications Section 8, Paragraph 2, Cabinet regulation No 194 of 19.06.2002 "Izglītības programmu minimālās prasības arhitekta profesionālās kvalifikācijas iegūšanai" may be not fulfilled in case of students with previous education experience.

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

The academic bachelor study programme "Architecture" (43581) fulfills the majority of requirements, and is attuned to the relevant developments in the field, its artistic and scientific developments. The experts acknowledge the positive contribution to the architecture field the programme has brought since its inception, as well as the challenges its further development entails. They do note both the challenge and success of implementing a program that becomes attractive to international students and staff. Moreover, the small size and informal communication among the students and the staff is. seen as a great positive.

In their evaluation some minor deficiencies have been identified. They are mainly concerned with the lack of care for the teaching staff, their wellbeing, the absence of designated workspaces for them, a clear workload distribution, as well as lack of outward mobility support. Likewise, facilities need a more optimal use of space and material provision (library reading room) to ensure the study objectives can be met at the current number of students. Furthermore, a minority of course descriptions are missing minor details, not fully following the language of studies.

The experts notice an untapped potential in a much broader collaboration between the different relevant study fields of the HEI (such as audiovisual media, business management), seeing that as a

possibility to broaden both the curriculum in new, innovative combinations. Furthermore, this could bring a much more defined differentiation of the study program among its national and international competition.

The experts emphasize the importance of the proper evaluation of the achievements and results of the previous education in order not to compromise basic values of the regulated profession of the architect and not violating requirements of the Law on the Regulated Professions and Recognition of the Professional Qualifications and Directive 2005/36/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the recognition of professional qualifications.

Overall, it is the view of the experts that all of these minor deficiencies can be eliminated within the 2-year accreditation period, while implementing the programme full time in its implementation language.

Strengths:
1. Strong international focus with both international staff and students
2. Informal atmosphere of in the studio space
3. Results of the study programme disseminated via artistic creation and exhibitions

Weaknesses:
1. Lack of care for the teaching staff, including insufficient resources, and no designated workspaces
2. Material provisions are lacking in some parts, for instance the collection of library (reading room) of relevant literature is insufficient.
3. Mechanical comparing of the titles of the study courses not taking into account full content and study results for applicants who benefit from previous education may lead to fail the compliance with Law on the Regulated Professions and Recognition of the Professional Qualifications and Directive 2005/36/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the recognition of professional qualifications.

Evaluation of the study programme "Architecture"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Architecture"

Short-term recommendations

Implement and present the teaching staff with formal and well-defined performance indicators of their workload and evaluate them accordingly.
Ensure that all of the course material is in English and there is no missing information
Ensure that all course descriptions match the actual content, and up to date
Provide sufficient space for the necessary facilities of the study programme, such as a modeling workshop sized appropriately to the size and needs of the study programme
Provide the staff with sufficient material provisions, including designated workspaces.
Provide the staff with sufficient resources to strengthen their research output

Expand the (reading room) library volume of literature that is relevant to the study programme, and sized appropriate to the needs of the study programme.

Revise the contents and relevance of technical subjects in the curriculum, evaluate the quality of their implementation.

Revise "Rules for the Recognition of Study Results Achieved during Previous Education or Professional Experience", "Preparation of Study Course Comparison Protocol and Individual Study Plan" ensuring the assessment of the study course content and study outcomes in order not to violate requirements of the Law on the Regulated Professions and Recognition of the Professional Qualifications and Directive 2005/36/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the recognition of professional qualifications.

Long-term recommendations

Explore the ways of broadening financial assistance to the students via internal and/or external sources of funding in order to broaden the participation in the study programme, including funded places.

Increase the number of elected teaching staff

Explore further integration of the curriculum with the audiovisual media arts and other programmes at the HEI to bring in more relevant free choice electives

Introduce a clause that regulates the use of students' intellectual property in the relevant contractual documents

Expand the range of elective courses so the students have a choice in the selection.

Seek ways of emphasizing much more the artistic qualities of students' thesis, both in terms of their design and representation.

II - "Architecture" ASSESSMENT

II - "Architecture" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The professional master's study programme "Architecture" complies with the study field of "Architecture and Construction" indicators, conditions and criteria. The length of the implementation of the study program, which is 2 years, is evaluated as sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and practical experience to enter the labor market.

2.1.2.The title of the study programme is "Architecture" in the study field "Architecture and Construction" with education classification code 47581. This is a professional masters programme thus after finishing the studies qualification given is "architect". The aim of the programme is to provide the students with the opportunity to acquire general knowledge and skills in the sector of architecture and associated sectors, to acquire basic skills and competencies required for work in the profession of an architect and planner in order to commence practical work under the leadership of a certified architect, as well as to prepare for further doctoral architectural studies or studies of other sectors related to the development of the environment. As stated in the SAR p.124, the

general objectives of the programme are to refer to the provision of the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies that prepare students for independent practice in architecture, as well as further studies in architecture or other sectors related to environmental planning arts. The main objective is to ensure professional studies that comply with the recommendations of ACE (Architects Council of Europe) and UIA (International Union of Architects) and professional standards, as well as to prepare highly qualified and competitive specialists for work in Latvia and abroad. The total length of studies is 2 years with a total amount of 80 credit points (120 ECTS) with a form of full-time studies. The studies take place on Thursday and Friday evenings and Saturdays as students typically work during the day time. The language of implementation of the studies is in English. The demand and usefulness of this programme is evaluated as high as there are only 2 universities in Latvia that provide studies on Master's level for future architects which is seen as a limited choice. The admission requirements of this study programme are 1. As already mentioned in the analysis of criterion 1.1.4, experts advise to change the admission requirements as at this point it is possible to get admitted to the professional Masters programme without an architectural Bachelor's degree as it was mentioned during onsite visit by a student that such a situation existed ; 2. Document that confirms the knowledge level in English (CE English exam, IELTS or TOEFL certificate).

2.1.3. Since the previous accreditation period, the study programme has been supplemented with new study courses. This decision has been made based on the topicality of the sector and by the request of the students and suggestions made in the surveys. These courses have been implemented as elective courses (Part C). In 2018/2019 a master's study course "Design Process and Project Management" was introduced. Furthermore, various new guest lecturers have been attracted to the university, mostly from foreign universities. During onsite visit and as also it has been stated within he SAR pp. 127-128, RISEBA is planning to add a specialization of the Master's programme in "Landscape Architecture and Urbanism". They are planning to introduce this in the spring of 2023 that students can choose the specialization of their studies based on their interests. Students choosing specialization of "Landscape Architecture and Urbanism" are still to be awarded with a qualification of an architect. The specialization is planned to work in the following way - students replace some of the basic courses with specialization courses. New lecturers have been attracted for this purpose and 17 new elective courses have been introduced from which 9 are elective courses, there are also workshops planned and some of the existing courses have been supplemented with additional information.

The changes made in the existing study courses are due to the planned specialization format. The changes outlined per courses and the credit point distribution has been described in detail on the SAR p. 128. The changes made with various improvements give a great start for diversity and specifications that students can choose from. In expert opinion, it is a crucial aspect of what Masters studies are about. Students choose to do Masters to specialize and deepen their knowledge in a specific field and in this case - architecture. As architecture is diverse, the implementation of changes are only seen as a positive aspect that gives space for diversification.

2.1.4. Due to the global economic crisis, the domestic demand for architectural services declined in the time period from 2010 to 2012. After that, starting with 2013, the demand has been constantly and steadily increasing. Until 2011, Latvia was the only country in the Baltic region with only one school of higher education that offered architectural education. Now, RISEBA is the second one but the only university in the region that is a private university which requires students to pay for the studies from their personal resources. The main difference between RTU and RISEBA is that RTU as a state university has budget places while RISEBA has none. It would be great and highly encouraged that RISEBA could find a way that some of the best students have the opportunity to study from the state budget. At this point only one student has been granted a state budget place per year. The

good aspect is that students who are permanent residents are offered a 20% discount. The tuition fee per study year is 4,800 EUR.

As the programme is comparably new there is not a lot of data of the employment of the graduates yet. Based on the available data at this point, graduates of the study direction "Architecture" are 90.00% employed, which proves the high quality of studies and the demand for skills in the labor market.

The operation of the Professional Master's study programme commenced during the 2017/2018 academic year. During this period, the total number of students has not changed which means that also has not increased. According to the SAR p.135, during the reporting period of the 2017/2018 academic year, there were 10 students, 4 of whom were international students. In the 2018/2019 academic year, the number of students reached 19, and 2 of them were international students. Meanwhile, in the 2019/2020 academic year, the number of students remained the same – 19 students, of whom 2 were international students. In the 2020/2021 academic year, the number of students in the Master's programme was 16 and none of them were international students. The number of students from 2019 to 2021 declined from 19 to 16 students. 28 master's students graduated from the programme since its introduction of the master's programme until 2021. International student flows in Master's programmes came from different countries: Kazakhstan, Croatia and Moldova.

In the 2018/2019 academic year, the number of students that dropped out decreased to 9 students, 1 student during the first year. The main reasons for dropping out – academic debts, financial problems, as well as poor quality of the final paper. In the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 academic years - there were no dropout students.

2.1.5. N/A

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

All of the indicators of the study programme are in compliance with the existing preconditions of the implementation of the study programme except for admission requirements which should be clarified. The study programme "Architecture" complies with the study field of "Architecture and Construction" indicators, conditions and criteria. The goals, objectives, learning outcomes are in line and in compliance. The corrections made within the study programme since the previous accreditation are according to the law and standard in place. The programme is in demand and there is a flow of incoming students every study year including international students as the programme is provided in English. There is a new specialization wished to be introduced in "Landscape Architecture and Urbanism", thus various new courses have been introduced and the existing courses supplemented. There is a certain level of dropout rate in the study programme but it is reasonable due to various possible reasons such as financial problems and academic debts. There are no specific shortcomings indicated except only one state budget place available. Various different tuition fee waivers available. Everything is in compliance with the criteria.

Strengths:
1. One of the two Master's programmes that provides in the country architectural education;
2. The study programme manages to attract international students due to the provision of studies in English, although the number of international students can be desired to be higher;
3. Various discounts available for the tuition fee;
4. Low dropout rate.

Weaknesses:
1. Only one student is provided a state budget place;
2. There is a possibility to entry the studies of the Masters in architecture with a non- architecture Bachelor's degree, which undermines the outcomes of the professional study programme

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The professional master programme "Architecture" is full time and takes 2 years to complete. Its compliance to both national educational and professional standards is assured in Annex #3.2. It must be noted that a new professional standard was approved 08.06.2022 however, the SAR Annex is based on the previous standard. RISEBA has provided compliance with new professional standard as additional information (on 13.10.).

The programme is arranged in 5 blocks according to SAR p.141, and they include thesis projects, architectural studies, internship work, the study of management and entrepreneurship, as well as elective courses. The spectrum of subjects covered in the curriculum is well structured and extensive; it allows the students to become well rounded experts in the field, and respond to the needs of the industry, labor market, and scientific/artistic trends. Compliance with all the relevant regulations is assured in SAR chapter 3.2, and the contents of studies are reviewed regularly by the head of the study field and the teaching staff.

Both according to experts meeting with graduates and employers, as well as upon the review of thesis projects indicate that overall the content of the study programme meets the general needs of the labor market, industry, and the broader discipline of architecture. Experts noted the study programme allows its graduates to be competitive in the industry and its labor market; and they are in demand in full and part time positions in the industry, and are both capable of engaging with administrative or legal, as well as creative and conceptual aspects of work. The best of thesis projects are executed thoroughly, and the overall framework for formulating the thesis ensures a well rounded approach that is grounded in theoretical and practical analysis. At the same time the strict formatting requirements lead to a certain degree of homogeneity in terms of architectural representation and artistic creation. Also, meeting with the graduates revealed that the technical subjects require much better coordination, as currently they are not aligned with the realities of building construction practice.

The overall module plan for the two year study programme indicates that the modules may be implemented in parallel to each other throughout the overall duration of the course, and internship takes place during the first three semesters. While this provides opportunities of studying interrelated subjects in a complementary manner, the suggested weekly time schedule of working day evenings and one day on a weekend (SAR p.136) pose a serious question of the quality in which these subjects can be realistically delivered and followed by the students. During the interview with graduates, it was made known to the experts that some students conduct their work or personal practice or parallel employment duties on the days scheduled for study activities.

The staff sees the benefit of flexible schedules as well as the possibility of gaining experience of the labor market for the students. However, interviews with students provide a mixed picture. While some see it as a positive to have an internship (which in reality blends with a permanent full time employment) during their studies, others find such a schedule difficult to follow, citing exhaustion after a day of work among the factors. Furthermore, several students and graduates mentioned that in their experience the master programme focuses more on management skills and much less on

design and technical aspects, which contradicts the study goals indicated at SAR p.142. Others allude to the fact that the other professional architecture master programme in Latvia is more demanding, and a parallel full time employment would not be as feasible there, citing this as one of the reasons why after completing bachelor's program at the HEI, they switched to the other institution for the master.

It must be noted that in the initial batch of materials submitted by the HEI for evaluation, the course description of "The legal framework of construction and design process" is a duplicate of the "Basics of Legal aspects", which is taught at the bachelor programme. The course description provided later demonstrates some shortcomings in course content: important professional legal aspects such as spatial and territory planning regulation, regulation on protection zones, building norms and standards are not covered.

The compliance to the professional standard of the study content of the both study programmes is analyzed in the additional document provided by RISEBA October 13. There is the corresponding study course marked for each knowledge, competence and skill required by professional standard. According to Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications Article 46,

"Training as an architect shall comprise:
(a) a total of at least five years of full-time study at a university or a comparable teaching institution, leading to successful completion of a university-level examination; or
(b) not less than four years of full-time study at a university or a comparable teaching institution leading to successful completion of a university-level examination, accompanied by a certificate attesting to the completion of two years of professional traineeship in accordance with paragraph 4." The same is stated on Latvian Law on Regulated Professions and Recognition of the Qualifications, Article 8. Therefore the compliance of the study programs with professional standard can be evaluated only for both study programs as a whole. It can be stated that study contents complies with the requirements of the professional standard.

2.2.2. The awarded degree is based on a master thesis, and the award of professional qualification is based on a reviewed examination. SAR p.143 indicates that the thesis development commences at the start of the study programme, so the first 3 of 4 semesters are invested in developing the overall idea and concept of the thesis, and each semester ending with a test. The final semester is spent on developing the thesis to a completed state. The teaching staff responsible for implementing the study programme are continuously involved in the scientific and artistic creation, both within the sphere of the study field as well as their individual practice, and this has a positive effect on the implementation of the study program.

2.2.3. The study programme is implemented with student-centered learning in mind both in theoretical and practical assignments. Student-centered education strategies are outlined in SAR p.150-152, and include a range of approaches, including the fostering of cooperation between the staff and the students, as well as cultivating their independence and autonomy, among others. In general, the teaching is implemented via an individualized approach, and in many instances based on informal arrangements. At the same time, there is a formal system for evaluating each of the study courses at its end, its implementation methods.

Experts' meetings with students revealed a strong reliance on informality when it comes to coordination of teaching schedule. On one hand the experts noted the positive effects on the informal atmosphere in the study programme, including the possibility of a direct communication to

the management, and especially the head of the study field. On the other hand, the experts noted during the interviews with staff that the overall understanding of formalized pedagogical methods in architecture is lacking; pedagogy is understood merely as a form of tacit knowledge that can be 'learned by doing' informally.

The concern in regard to a strong reliance on informality in teaching methods was furthered by the meeting with students, who generally did not demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of disciplinary knowledge of the study programme. During the meeting, on multiple instances the students kept referring to the benefits of architecture technology and practical management skills as their main study outcomes, which does not fully align with the study contents and planned results of the programme as indicated in SAR p.137-148.

The programme is implemented fully in English. The experts noted that all of the staff, management, students, and graduates possess a very good command of English. Foreign students are offered courses in basic Latvian. At the same time, it must be noted that some of the study course descriptions are not fully implemented in English, some of the key bibliography entries in those descriptions allude to material in Latvian or Russian, which might be inaccessible to foreign students.

2.2.4. Internship is one of the five key modules that is implemented alongside the other modules during the 2 year program. SAR p.145 outlines that it spans across the first three semesters, and amounts to the total of 26 credit points. It is a mandatory component of the professional master, and is aligned with two objectives: (1) to expose the students to the professional realities of the discipline (2) to aid students' development of research and design skills, including architectural representation. Consequently, the module of internship consists of two parts: one being part of an architecture practice or an institution, and the second a more loosely interpreted "individually oriented practice" which can be interpreted either as independent design practice, or other related projects of social or cultural entrepreneurship.

SAR p.157 states that "internship allows to establish professional work relations with the potential employer at the office during studies", and SAR chapter 3.2 assures compliance of internship to the relevant requirements and regulatory enactments. It is regulated by "Architecture" internship requirements, and Annex #8a shows a trilateral internship contract sample. According to the opinion of experts, the contract lacks several critical elements, such as the stipulation of maximum number of hours spent weekly within the internship in order to limit the potential conflict of interest between study and work time. Furthermore, a cap on maximum count of interns depending on company size should be introduced to ensure the required capacity of leadership of the internship within an organization. The intention of this regulation is to ensure sufficient opportunities for learning, as well as sufficient supervision time available at the place of internship for each intern.

SAR p.134 indicates the positive aspects of practicing architects teaching in the study programmes simultaneously offering internship opportunities for the students, and the close cooperation between the employers, the study programme, and the students is certainly an asset, especially considering a situation that there is a significant demand for architects in the workforce. Conversations with foreign students and graduates revealed that overall they can find places of internship, and their integration within the workplace is overall sufficient. One of the challenges is dealing with written documents and national building legislation, which is a challenge shared across Europe and beyond, and is not a significant obstacle to an internship per se.

At the same time, experts learned in conversation with the graduates and employers, there have

been instances where teaching staff employ students in their own practices simultaneously, or where students run their own commercial practices, while using one of their subordinate employees as the "architect of record" who also is supposed to offer supervision and professional guidance of the internships. This underscores the need for developing a policy at the level of study field to avoid any potential conflict of interest between these parties.

Furthermore, the interviews with the teaching staff, management of the study field, as well as students, graduates, and employers revealed an overall ambivalence in terms of internship, the implementation of the study programme, and simultaneous part or full time employment, as expanded elsewhere in this report, including section 2.2.1. To this point, SAR p.136 indicates the study programme is "designed to enable the students to combine their studies with practice." Full time studies are organized on the evening of business days and on Saturdays to enable the students to combine their studies with practice. While on hand this leads to flexibility that allows students to tailor their schedules to the study process, it also undermines the achievement of study objectives, and poses a question whether the study programme functions as a full time programme in qualitative terms, i.e. whether the students are able to properly meet the study objectives in the given conditions.

Experts' interviews with the students and graduates revealed that the particular configuration of the weekly schedule of the study programme appears as inadvertently encouraging students to undertake full or nearly full time employment in parallel to their studies. In return, this can have a negative effect on the quality of their participation in the study program. Experts' interviews with graduates revealed that it has been common among them to work 5 days a week—at the place of internship or elsewhere— while simultaneously following the full time study programme. Considering these conditions, it becomes difficult to picture how, in practical terms, the students are able to commit reasonable time and attention to fulfill the workload prescribed by the full time study programme and their employment.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6. The topics of the thesis are generally related to the latest developments and topics in the field, and they often engage with briefs and prompts that are based on current discussions in the field and broader cultural sphere. Moreover, the experts see it positively that the thesis are exhibited and also combined into an annual publication of the study programme. At the same time, meeting with students and graduates revealed that some of the thesis topics arise from the projects in their parallel employment and/or place of practice, which on one hand can be a positive reinforcement of the project, on the other leads to a conflict of interest between commercial and academic pursuits as well as intellectual and practical authorship of some of the thesis projects. More specifically, a distinction needs to be maintained that thesis, while possibly but not necessarily rooted in certain realities, is not an equivalent to a professional project of an architecture practice. While in some instances both may be dealing with the same set of problems, one is bound to a client relationship and its economic rationale, while the other is intended to demonstrate both academic and professional competencies acquired in the study programme, including the ability to critically reflect on the project at a higher level. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the thesis project in its content does not become a direct extension or a replica of an ongoing or upcoming work of a professional practice that the student might have a relationship to, including the places of internship.

The thesis vary in their themes and content, but are homogenous in their form, which adheres to a specific form of a professional vernacular realism—the discursive and formatting conventions of

professionalized architecture projects in Latvia, which historically represent a narrow segment of the overall professional architecture discourse. This might be beneficial for preparing students for work in an architectural practice in Latvian professional context, but is much less relevant to those domestic and international students who might choose to practice elsewhere or follow other models of architectural practice within the field, especially if RISEBA is attempting to differentiate its offering from RTU and other architecture programmes in the region.

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

The professional master programme "Architecture" is a promising and new offering in terms of its study content in Latvia and the region. Its curriculum is regularly revised and designed based on five thematic modules to cover the core competencies of architecture, and it corresponds to many of the current tendencies in the field. The degree is awarded based on achievements and findings relevant to the field, and certain practices of student centered learning are observed in the implementation of the programme even if the overall level of pedagogical awareness among the staff should be improved over time. Internship is a crucial component of the study process, and allows the students to get a good understanding of practical dynamics in the architecture industry.

At the same time, the overall scheduling of the study programme poses serious questions of the quality and depth in which students meet their learning outcomes. While in quantitative terms the study programme is implemented in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions in Latvia and other relevant regulations, the quality of its outcome remains questionable due to the scheduling of classes, i.e. evenings and a day of the weekend. The exploration of better models to accommodate the economic realities of Latvia is commendable, but in experts' opinion the current model sits somewhere in between a full and a part time program, leading to a perception in some instances that the study programme is merely a "vocational add-on" running alongside the student's full-time employment and their pathway to the professional registration. Therefore, the programme, its schedule and the means of implementation should be redefined, planned, and enforced much more strictly and clearly to ensure students' involvement in all of the study activities at their full capacity.

Furthermore, the lack of disciplinary understanding demonstrated by students poses a question about the actual extent in which the approaches to teaching, including the teaching methods, are effective in delivering all parts of the study content. While this likely is one of the consequences of the course scheduling in question, the management should carefully reevaluate both the teaching methods and the ways they are implemented to ensure the study contents stated in SAR are actually covered to the full extent and via relevant teaching methods.

Strengths:
1. Multifaceted and diverse curriculum structure covers the core competencies of an architect
2. Thesis projects communicated to the broader public and other students via an exhibition and a publication
3. Staff involved in design and artistic creation, positively reinforcing the study contents
4. Student thesis cover a diverse range of themes relevant to the industry and broader social sphere, and the design part is grounded in academic research

Weaknesses:
1. Undefined relationship between study internships, employment, and implementation of the study programme leads to questionable study outcomes and may also negatively impact student well

being

2. Internship contract lacks specificity, for example it does not stipulate maximum and minimum amount of hours per week (according to an estimate calculation of credit points, it would equal to approx. 1.5 working days per week); the expected specific results of the internship, and structured criteria to evaluate the particular internship.

3. The scheduling of study activities and contact time resemble a part time program, compromising the study outcomes and leaving too much unspecified time during the working week.

4. Student centered learning methods insufficiently explained to staff in terms of a formalized training. Their effectiveness is not evaluated formally.

5. Technical subjects are not always aligned with realities of building construction practices, and students are lacking understanding how to integrate this knowledge into the design project.

6. Not all course descriptions and readings delivered in English

7. Student theses have a tendency to be homogenous in their form of representation and design approaches

8. Overarching policy for avoiding conflict of interest between students and internship/place of employment is lacking.

9. The actual implementation of teaching methods do not entirely align with the needs and the outlined content of the study program

10. The contents of "The legal framework of construction and design process" demonstrates some shortcomings in course content: important professional legal aspects such as spatial and territory planning regulation, regulation on protection zones, building norms and standards are not covered.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study programme is based on the relevant discourse of the field, however the time schedule of programme's implementation and lack of regulation of internship and parallel employment do compromise the learning outcomes.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. The study provisions, informative, material and technical, are partially compliant for the study programme Architecture (47581). Informative resources are available from the library of RISEBA University of Applied Sciences that is located at Meža Street 3, Inter-library subscriptions, online databases and press publications, e-books, e-journals. The Faculty of Architecture and Design has its own library branch and a reading room located in the premises of the faculty at Durbes Street 4 (SAR p. 50, 52). The collection of the reading room is small (470 titles - SAR p.52) but high quality. The budget earmarked for the supply of books in the study program amounts to EUR 1,000 per year (SAR p. 47). There is a procedure developed for convenient ordering of the resources from the library and a procedure for lecturers, including guest lecturers, to request a limited annual amount of new materials of special interest (SAR p. 51). Althoough due to the relatively small size in numbers of the faculty the procedure works more in an informal and direct communication way, for instance with students and director of the study programme or the dean of the faculty (according to info from site visit meetings with the director of the study programmes, academic staff and students).

Both the students and academic personnel are satisfied with RISEBA e-learning platform MOODLE. Other platforms are integrated and provide the necessary online environment for information and communication.

As for the material and technical provision, during the tour of facilities expert group found it inspiring for the students to have an open studio type design workshop room for different study years to work together and the fact that each student is given 24/7 access to a workplace in the design workshop. A computer class with 12 workstations is available as part of the facilities (SAR p.49). The experts learned that the workstations are fitted with the latest software needed for the implementation of the study programme. Yet, the workshop rooms for wood, carpentry and scale modeling were relatively small in size for the number of students. Also the lecture rooms that are divided from the studio type design room only by fabric curtains raised questions. The expert group was impressed by the well equipped multifunctional rooms of the neighboring study programme of Audiovisual Media and would encourage further collaboration among the programmes.

As it became apparent during the interviews with the staff and facility visit, not all of the teaching staff are allocated permanent workspace; workarounds include using meeting rooms and other spaces to be converted into temporary workstations. This observation refers not only to temporary employed staff, but also elected staff. Furthermore, it became apparent that staff are using their own personal equipment in the process of implementing study objectives. All of this poses questions both about the well-being and productivity of the staff, but also their ability to perform administrative and preparatory tasks for teaching.

Special attention was raised by the situation of a full time study programme lecture hours on Thursday, Friday evenings and Saturdays (SAR p. 130) - thus encouraging the students to work full time. There is little question left that it must affect the quality of studies. This issue refers both to material, technical (in terms of the use of premises) and funding sphere. Study activity hours of the full time program being allocated exclusively on evenings and a day on the weekend pose a question of tiredness and attention, i.e. to what extent are the students able to meet the workload, and in what quality can they follow the study activities. Some of the responses gained on experts' visit suggest that the particular schedule is an outcome of limited material conditions, i.e. some of the premises of the building need to be used by alternating "shifts" between bachelor and master study programmes. Other responses for the management suggest that the schedule exists to cater the different schedules of the internships, making an impression that the whole study programme is de-facto organized around internships, which in reality are supposed to take up only 1.9 out of 5 working days per week.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3. The funding available to the study programme, funding sources and the use of funding ensures partial implementation of the study process. The HEI is funded predominantly by tuition fees which make over 80% of its income as indicated in SAR chapter 2.3. The system for funding scientific and applied research is in place. Financial support is available to the staff for their scientific research work, as well as trips, participation in conferences and publications and are awarded in accordance with HEI-wide policies of finance distribution. According to SAR p.47, the research funding made available to the staff is a minor fraction of the overall funding per student (2.5% for master's programme), which might pose a question to what extent the ambition of HEI to intensify its research activities within the study field is attainable (as indicated both in SAR and the interviews with the management of HEI), and whether further investment in research activities of the study field by HEI may be needed. This is an even more acute problem especially keeping in mind the

future ambition of the faculty to go for a PhD programme. The management of the study field acknowledges that it has taken initial steps to intensify research activities in connection to the research group as part of the master study programme.

At the same time the fraction for remuneration for freelance faculty members (14.7% for bachelor programme) ensures valuable contribution of practising local tutors and acknowledged international tutors.

The issue raised in the chapter 2.3.1. concerning lecture hours affecting the quality of studies refers also to funding sphere.

The minimum number of students in the Architecture master's programme is 7 (SAR p. 48) - which is met. Each year there are 10 students enrolled.

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

The study provisions (informative and material, technical) are partially compliant for the study programme, due to lack of material and equipment provisions for the teaching staff, insufficient amount of rooms for simultaneous activities, small model workshop and relatively small volume of library resources. The open studio type workshop is inspiring even if minor shortfalls exist, the IT infrastructure is decent and development of library provisions clearly defined, student support available. Research activities should be more encouraged by all means. The situation of a full time study programme lecture hours on Thursday, Friday evenings and Saturdays encourages the students to work full time, that might negatively affect the quality of studies. This issue refers both to material, technical (in terms of the use of premises) and funding sphere.The funding available to the study programme, funding sources and the use of funding ensures implementation of the study process. The minimum number of students is met.

Strengths:
1. An open studio type design workshop room for different study years to work together and the fact that each student is given 24/7 access to a workplace in the design workshop.
2. Multiple forms of support, formal and informal, that are made available to the students.
3. Sharing of facilities with the audiovisual media study field provides a lot of potential for collaboration, and access to high quality spaces.
4. Presence of acknowledged international tutors and local practising professionals.

Weaknesses:
1. Lecture hours are organized on Thursday, Friday evenings and Saturdays thus incentivizing the students to work full time whilst undertaking a full-time study program.
2. Relatively low amount of resources for strengthening the research output of the study programme, both in terms of funding and allocated time (35%).
3. Lack of material and equipment provisions for the teaching staff of the study programme.
4. Relatively small volume of library resources relevant for the topics specific to the study programme.
5. Allocation of functions among the facilities is not fully optimal—staff are lacking permanently designated working spaces, the amount of available seminar and activity rooms in relation to the total number of students is relatively low.
6. Model workshop is inadequate in its dimensions, capacity and equipment for the size of the study field.

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: Partially compliant

Interviews with the staff, faculty visit and SAR indicates that there is: (1) a relatively low amount of resources for strengthening the research output of the study programme; (2) lack of material and equipment provisions for the teaching staff of the study programme; (3) a relatively small volume of library resources relevant for the topics specific to the study programme; (4) allocation of functions among the facilities is not fully optimal; (5) model workshop inadequate in its capacity and equipment for the size and nature of the study field.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements outlined in the regulatory enactments, and it enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.The study program is conducted in English, and the proficiency in the language is at a very good level, verified during the interview with the teaching staff and the students. Of the seven elected teaching staff, 4 have PhDs and 3 with Master's degrees but with sufficient practical experience relevant to the subject. The small number of elected staff has been identified and recognized by the HEI (SAR, p.165); therefore, the development of this realm looks promising and achievable within the indicated period of 5 years.According to SER pp.120, CVs and during the panel interview verified that most of the visiting lecturers are professionals in the field. They are recruited on a rotating basis, depending on the workload of their primary job. The expert group saw their professional preparedness with the market as positive. Whereas within the framework of studies and research practice, students get acquainted with practices of companies working in architecture, practicing architects, separate projects, and structures both in Latvia and abroad. The research activities of the academic staff provide feedback for the transfer of knowledge from the field of scientific research to creativity and vice versa.

2.4.2. The HEI has purposefully taken measures so that changes in the composition of the teaching staff do positively affect the quality of the study programme's implementation and the study programme's compliance with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments. Especially with the guest lectures engaged for 2-4 semesters. In contrast, the number of elected lectures needs to be increased due to having a more stable composition of the staff responsible for the programme's continuation and maintaining the required changes.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4. Annex 14 of the SER has listed the publications in the last six years for each member of the academic staff, which showcases not a significant number of published articles/research in peer-reviewed editions. All teaching staff who do not have Ph.D. have satisfactory practical experience relevant to the subject being taught. Each member of the teaching staff complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and has five years of practical work experience in their field (SAR, p.165). According to the SAR and the FAD management interview, within the study field, the teaching staff works in three directions: scientific research, pedagogical and organizational, and

accordingly, their performance is evaluated. While during the panel interview with the teaching staff, the workload of these three parameters was unclear to them. Therefore, formal and well-defined performance indicators for the teaching staff should be developed and clarified.

2.4.5. A mechanism for the cooperation of the teaching staff in implementing the study programme has been established. It ensures the achievement of the aims of the study program and the interconnection of study courses within the programme. Both local and international lecturers are involved in each course, and the director of the study programme is the primary contact person for cooperation or working together on the development of the study programme (SAR, p.169). All these activities ensure the quality of studies and support the latest architectural trends. The lecture-student ratio is 1:8, thus ensuring an individual approach for each student (SAR, p.171).

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

The most significant advantage of the engaged teaching staff is the guest lectures coming from national and international industrial markets, whose experience is up to date and in line with the trends and courses taught. At the same time, the biggest obstacle is the low number of elected teaching staff, who are supposed to be responsible for the continuation of the study programme. Their academic performance is evaluated in three areas (teaching, research, and organization). The low number of elected staff can cause overburden in one of the areas, whereas the distribution of the workload cannot be proportional. The pecking order between the students, management, and the teaching staff showcases that the last seems to be the most unrepresented. The teaching staff's performance should be formal and well-defined. They lack scientific research. But on the other hand, they are doing excellent work with students by always being flexible with their management requests; consequently, their work should be accordingly acknowledged.

Strengths
1. Proper professional/practical qualification of the teaching staff for the taught courses
2. The good command of the English Language
3. The involvement of the international teaching staff as guest lecturers.

Weaknesses
1. Small number of the elected teaching staff
2. Lack of scientific publications and the involvement in research-related scientific projects of the academic staff
3. No formal and well-defined performance indicators for the teaching staff

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's professional/practical qualification for the taught courses is in compliance with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme , however, there is a small number of the elected teaching staff.

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

 Annex 6 to study programme SAR provides complete and true analysis of compliance with the State Professional Higher Education Standard.

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

 Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

 The compliance to the professional standard of the study content of the both study programmes is analyzed in the additional document provided by RISEBA October 13. There is the corresponding study course marked for each knowledge, competence and skill required by professional standard.

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

 Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

 Course descriptions contain all the parameters set forth in Section 56(1) , 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

 Annex to SAR of the study programme "Architecture" 47581 contains all requisites set out in Cabinet regulation No 202 of 19.04.2013 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus"

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

 N/A

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: Fully compliant

 N/A

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

N/A

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

International guest lecturers and elected international staff are not proficient in Latvian language, but this is not seen as a problem considering English is the working language of the study field

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

Annex 12 - Attestation of the rector of the RISEBA, certifying teaching staff's at least B-2 knowledge of language in which they teach study courses

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

Annex 7: There is no article in agreement for use of student's intellectual property, however subject is covered by "NL 4901-001 Students' intellectual property management regulation"

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

There is an agreement with Latvian University of Agriculture on opportunities to continue their education, however this HEI does not provide an equivalent study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 6 - Attestation of the rector of the RISEBA, 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.

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

N/A

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

Assessment of compliance: Non-compliant

Requirements of Directive 2005/36/EC on the Recognition of professional Qualifications, Article 46, and Law on regulated professions and recognition of professional qualifications Section 8, Paragraph 2, are not fulfilled - persons not holding a degree of the bachelor of architecture are admitted to master studies, see analysis in assessment p. 1.1.4. Architecture technology and construction management degrees can not be considered as architectural degrees and can not be recognized to admit to master of architecture studies. Students with non-architectural bachelor degrees or first-level higher education admitted to the bachelor of architecture studies must not be exempted from design courses.

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

See assessment of the criterias 11 - There is an agreement with Latvian University of Agriculture on opportunities to continue their education, however this HEI does not provide an equivalent study programme, 14 - Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications, Article 46, and Law on regulated professions and recognition of professional qualifications Section 8, Paragraph 2, are not fulfilled because persons not holding a degree of the bachelor of architecture are admitted to master studies

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

The professional master study programme "Architecture (47581) fulfills the many requirements, and is attuned to the relevant developments in the field, its artistic and scientific developments. The experts acknowledge the ambition and the challenge of developing a relatively new study program with an alternative offering, and the positive contribution to the architecture culture it brings. Its international focus, both in terms of hiring international staff and attracting international students is a strong positive. The study programme is also governed by an atmosphere of informality, which allows efficient communication and a creative atmosphere on the premises. The results of the study process are disseminated to the broader public, contributing positively to the broader field.

In the evaluation some structural deficiencies have been identified, such as admission requirements that may allow the admission for students without a bachelor degree in architecture, which contradicts the legal framework regulating the professional education of an architect. Secondly, the class schedule of the programme qualitatively corresponds with the model of part-time education—classes take place on evenings and one day of the weekend. Moreover, the question of sufficient course scheduling is exacerbated by the lack of clarity of regulating internships. While certain regulations are in place, interviews with the students, graduates, and employers revealed a murky picture, where internship blends with a parallel full time employment, and often both of these activities take priority over the course and studio work at the studio programme. Besides from the fact that this makes the achievement of study programme's learning goals questionable, these deficiencies allude to an impression that students and graduates treat the study programme merely as a "vocational add-on" running alongside their working lives (employment) and their pathway to

professional registration. As a result, contrary to the programme's study objectives, architecture is treated mostly as a matter of business and administration rather than means of engaging with and disseminating the disciplinary and professional knowledge about the built environment. Here it can also be added that this might have to do with the shortage of physical space, which also reflects on the teaching staff, the vast majority of whom do not have designated workspaces.

Furthermore, some minor deficiencies have been identified, such as a minority of course descriptions missing minor details, not following the language of studies, as well as low levels of elected staff, and insufficient contents of technical subjects. Likewise, the facilities need further development—while the informal and creative atmosphere is a competitive advantage to the other local offerings of architecture education in Latvia and it contributes positively to the achievement of study objectives, it may also lack some adequate facilities, most notably designated workspaces for the teaching staff.

Overall, it is the view of the experts that all of these deficiencies, both minor and major, can be eliminated within the 2-year accreditation period, while implementing the programme full time in its implementation language.

Strengths:
1. Strong international focus with both international staff and students
2. Informal atmosphere of in the studio space
3. Results of the study programme disseminated via artistic creation and exhibitions

Weaknesses:
1. Admission criteria insufficiently strict in terms of only admitting students with prior bachelor degree in architecture. Thus Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications, Article 46, and Law on regulated professions and recognition of professional qualifications Section 8, Paragraph 2, are not fulfilled.
2. The quality of the schedule for implementing the study programme is questionable
3. Insufficient resources for the teaching staff

Evaluation of the study programme "Architecture"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Architecture"

Short-term recommendations

The regulation "Admission requirements" appendix 10 8.p. sets out the requirements for previous education as "Academic or professional undergraduate degree in architecture or an equal area." This requirement has to be immediately updated to ensure that only persons holding bachelor degree in architecture are admitted to masters programme to fulfill the requirement of the Directive 2005/36/EC - Article 46;

The weekly course schedule of the Master programme should be substantially reorganized to ensure students are able to qualitatively meet the study outcomes and follow the study process in reasonable time and extent.

Develop and implement a policy of part time work, so that a maximum hours per week of part time work is specified.
The internship contract needs to stipulate the maximum working hours per week, its specific results and structured evaluation criteria, and the overall relation of between studies and work during the study period
Implement and present to the teaching staff the formal and well-defined performance indicators of their workload and evaluate them accordingly.
Ensure that all of the course material is in English and there is no missing or duplicate information
Provide sufficient space for the necessary facilities of the study programme, such as a modeling workshop sized in proportion to the size of the study programme
Provide the staff with sufficient material provisions, including designated workspaces and opportunities for outgoing academic mobility.
Provide sufficient resources for strengthening the research output of the study programme
Expand the library (reading room) catalog volume of literature that is relevant to the study programme, and is sized appropriate to the needs of the study programme

Long-term recommendations

Increase the number of elected teaching staff.
Revise the contents, implementation and relevance of technical subjects in the curriculum
Develop and implement an overarching policy for avoiding conflict of interest between students, the teaching staff, and internship/place of employment
Ensure training in student-centered learning methods for the staff
Seek ways of emphasizing much more the artistic qualities of students' thesis, both in terms of their design and representation

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:	Fully compliant		Overall, the university has established a well - working quality assurance system, although there are minor things that lack feedback to the students, graduates and employers of the survey results and teaching staff monitoring mechanism.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)		Partially compliant	The artistic and design approach is conducted effectively, and outcomes are developed and incorporated into the study content. However, the teaching staff and students' involvement in scientific research is moderate. Therefore, FAD should find ways of endorsing greater involvement through Project-Based Learning (PBL), Live Projects whose results can be presented at conferences, scientific articles, exhibitions, reports, etc.
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 cooperation is implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations. It ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field. Minor shortcomings do exist in having a formalized and transparent policy for attracting foreign staff, and establishing meaningful, strategically aligned partnerships with other HEIs and organizations.

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			1. The number of leading positions has been increased (SAR p. 83). 2. Employee development policies have been introduced (SAR p. 83 and site interviews with the management of HEI, academic personnel). 3. More extensive mobility options have been introduced (Annexes #16, 17, 18, 19, SAR p. 79, interviews with students). 4. Supplementation of library resources has been done (SAR p. 50).

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	Architecture (43581)	Not relevant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good
2	Architecture (47581)	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Average

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

None